

WINSTON CHURCHILL

by

ROBERT SENCOURT

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To Miss Amy Paget, of the Château de Garibondy,
and her brother, Lord Queenborough, President of
the Royal Society of Saint George, in gratitude.
With constant openness of heart and house, they
preserve from the Victorian Court, like their Prime
Minister, a high tradition of service and love for
England.

To be bred in a place of estimation; to see nothing low or sordid from one's infancy; to be taught to respect oneself; to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; to look early to public opinion; to stand upon such elevated ground as to be enabled to take a large view of the widespread and infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs in a large society; to have leisure to read, to reflect, to converse; to be enabled to have the court and attention of the wise and learned wherever they may be found; to be habituated in armies to command and to obey; to be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honour and duty; to be proved in the highest degree of vigilance, foresight and circumspection and a state of things in which no fault is committed with impunity, and the slightest mistakes draw on the most ruinous consequences—to be led to a guarded and regulated conduct, from a sense, that you are considered as an instructor of your fellow citizens in their highest concerns and that you act as a reconciler between God and man—to be employed as an administrator of law and justice and to be thereby amongst the first benefactors of mankind—to be a professor of high science and of liberal and ingenuous art—to be amongst rich traders who from their success are presumed to have sharp and vigorous understandings and to possess the virtues of diligence, order, constancy and regularity, and to have cultivated an habitual regard to commutative justice—these are the circumstances of men that form what I should call a natural aristocracy, without which there is no nation.—Burke, 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.'

Contents

I. The Son of Mercury	<i>page</i> 13
II. The Hussar	30
III. The Young Englander	55
IV. The Lead of Rosebery	72
V. The First Lord	89
VI. Lord Fisher and the Navy	109
VII. Carnage in the West	132
VIII. Under Lloyd George	149
IX. Under Demos	166
X. A Duel with Money	183
XI. The Master of Style	201
XII. The Mentor of Demos	222
XIII. Dictators ride Tigers	238
XIV. The Colleague of Chamberlain	264
XV. Britain's Leader at Bay	281

Preface

At a crisis in history, the eyes of a people are fixed on not only a King but the Minister who acts for him to co-ordinate and direct the energy of the Empire. In a hurried age, it may be a convenience to have a record of the thoughts and adventures of the great-hearted and popular leader whom the Empire has known through the vicissitudes of forty years.

For the material of this book I am indebted to three sources: (1) the books of Mr. Churchill himself, to which I owe my first obligation. Extracts from these are the more valuable since several are out of print: and in a hurried age there is need of a personal compendium even of the rest, for they are voluminous; (2) the speeches of Mr. Churchill as reported in Hansard or *The Times*; (3) references to Mr. Churchill in Memoirs already published, including three useful biographical sketches, made some years ago.

These three sources have been filled out here and there, as at Blenheim, Sandhurst or in the life of the cavalryman in India, by a personal knowledge of some fields of Mr. Churchill's experience. But, although I have personal connection with some of Mr. Churchill's relatives and many of his friends, I have not for this sketch sought either unpublished sources or private information. There was material enough (much more than enough) in what has been already published.

For forty years Mr. Churchill has been contributing material of the first importance to the history of England: the

line he has taken has been fundamentally, but not monotonously, consistent: he has given brilliant gifts to the pursuit of the welfare of Britain, and of the world: and the principles which he has followed are typical of the highest order of value to-day and its aftermath. They are framed in a life of high action and high adventure.

Mr. Churchill has completed his part in history by his narrative of it: and this book would not have been complete without a critical appreciation of his work as that of an orator and a writer of history

I had intended to close this book with Mr. Churchill becoming Prime Minister, but this came in a moment of such sudden sweeping and dramatic change that I felt obliged to state the position when the changes of the next few weeks were accomplished.

In all references to politics I have followed Mr Churchill as closely as I can, but where it touches on foreign policy this book also owes much to my studies of an unpublished manuscript by my friend, Sir Victor Wellesley, former Deputy Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

R. S.

CHAPTER 1

The Son of Mercury

It is a long way now to look back to 1874, the year when Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace. Close on sixty years earlier the great Duke of Wellington had won Waterloo, and there were still men alive of the 35,000 who had fought under him with Blücher to defeat the Emperor of the French. But at Blenheim, memory went back a full hundred years further to another Duke, who had commanded 9,000 men at another battle, where an earlier sovereign of France had been compelled to forego his hopes of supremacy in Europe. In the years before 1874, however, that long supremacy of France had received a heavier blow than Marlborough or Wellington had ever aimed at giving it. In 1866 France's ancient rival, Austria, having been defeated by Bismarck at Sadowa, Vienna had ceased to dominate the heritage of Charlemagne. In 1870 France had herself been defeated and invaded, and the Austrian Ambassador in Paris had written to Vienna of Europe's new nightmare, the omnipotence of Bismarck, while the last sovereigns of France had found a refuge in England.

It was in the late summer of 1873, the very year that Napoleon III died at Chislehurst, that an American lady, Mrs. Jerome, who had for some years been living in Paris—where till 1870 she and her daughters had been made particularly welcome at a sparkling and sumptuous Court—had taken a

cottage at Cowes in the Isle of Wight. Cowes, at that season of the year, was the centre of that privileged company, the Royal Yacht Club, and in 1873 an added glitter was given to its brilliance by the presence of the heir to the throne of Russia—of Russia whose territories were equal in extent to the whole surface of the moon, of Russia whose portentous power threatened the imperial policy of Victoria from the Bosphorus to Japan, of Russia whose manœuvring in the Balkan States for the next forty years was to be the consuming preoccupation of the diplomats of Europe. Mrs. Jerome's daughter, Jenny, was invited to a ball where the officers of the cruiser *Ariadne* were entertaining the Tsarevitch and the Tsarevna. There she met Lord Randolph Churchill. To each, every moment together was golden and in three days they were plighted together for life.

They were a pair fitted to ride together in the high pageant of England. Born at Trieste, and trained in Imperial Paris, she had enterprise and imagination, joined to a full, lithe figure, an eye of passion, sharpened by calculation, a swift, able wit, and all that sense of power which money gives to an able American, even if she is only on the threshold of womanhood at nineteen years of age. Her father, Leonard Jerome, had founded the two great American race-courses, Coney Island Jockey Club and Jerome Park. He combined his sporting successes with a powerful political connection: for he was both owner and editor of the *New York Times*. He was as powerful as he was versatile, and in 1862, being a vehement champion of Lincoln and his war, had defended the newspaper office in New York with a battery, and beaten off the peacemakers, not without bloodshed. He was father of three daughters, all of whom married well in England: one to Mr. Moreton Frewen, who in time sat in Parliament before he became the father of Clare Sheridan; the other to Sir John Leslie, with whom she went to brighten in India the days of the Duke of Connaught,

who has paid her till the present day the tribute of a warm and courtly admiration.

2

But neither Mr. Moreton Frewen nor Sir John Leslie could compare in the gifts of fortune and leadership with Lord Randolph Churchill. It was a central moment for the privileges of rank and wealth, and there was a high pregnancy of romance in the dukedom of Marlborough. John Churchill had won it with his famous campaigns, while his wife, Sarah, in her hold over Queen Anne had associated it with the additional glamour of successful intrigue. Nor were these the only pair to carve it deep into the memory of England: for while John was subjugating Barbara Villiers, whom Charles II had made Duchess of Cleveland, his sister, Arabella, had early fascinated Queen Anne's father, James II. She was thus the mother of that Duke of Berwick from whom the Dukes of Alba are descended. In fact, a flair for escapade mingled with the high tradition of the Churchills; there was a hint of the mutinous in their individuality, just as there was a hint of passion in the melting eye and full, though firm lips, of Jenny Jerome; in her attractiveness, as in the dash of her bridegroom, was noted the exhilaration of the storm.

Randolph Churchill had grown up since he was born in 1849 in the full tide of Conservative Victorian aristocracy. From his childhood, he enjoyed it with high vitality and some insolence: even at his first school he could always go one better than other boys. At Eton in 1863 he had led a host of charging comrades, who knocked down the police so that they could reach the carriage of the Prince of Wales on his wedding-day. 'He bowed to me I am perfectly certain, but I shrieked louder. I am sure, if the Princess did not possess very strong nerves, she would have been frightened, but all she did was to smile

blandly. At last the train moved off while the band played "God save the Queen". . . . to my unspeakable grief, I was bereaved of a portion of my clothing, viz. my hat.¹ So young Randolph at the age of fourteen wrote to his mother, the Duchess. He had a way of laughing loud and often, of dressing loudly (for he would don even a violet waistcoat) and he had, with a good natured whimsicality, a sulky lip. When detected and captured stealing strawberries, he turned on his captor, Mr. Austen Leigh, with the words 'You beast!' and yet escaped the birch. In days when hats were a pointer to character, the one he wore at Eton was disreputable; his whole appearance was reckless—and his companions seemed the same.² The Duke, warned of his ways, wrote to him: 'You allow both your language and your manner a most improper scope.'³

Though still full of fun at Oxford, he had suddenly become spruce and polished. There he took his place more easily among the rich and great; he impressed at Merton his Warden, the great historian, Mandell Creighton, who already noted of him that: 'He would take up a subject and talk about it till he had reached its bottom.'⁴ He found one of his college tutors opposing his father's politics at Blenheim, and wrote a letter: a letter that showed extraordinary dignity in a son defending his father, while so cleverly arranged as to leave the tutor no loophole for escape. But should he send it? asked the Warden when Randolph brought it and showed it. 'I have decided that for myself,' was the answer. 'What I asked you was if you saw anything in the letter you thought unbecoming,' 'If you are going to send a letter at all,' said Mandell Creighton, 'you could not send a better one.'⁵

¹ *Life of Lord R. Churchill*, pp. 10, 16.

² Rosebery, *Lord R. Churchill*, p. 33.

³ *Life of Lord R. Churchill*, p. 13.

⁴ *Life*, I, p. 35.

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

The Oxford undergraduate soon became a figure in Oxfordshire. He took to horses, hunted keenly with the Heythrop and Bicester packs, and harried the hares of Woodstock; at Blenheim he impressed Disraeli: at Oxford Creighton noticed a marked ability for politics, and in fact the young man worked so well that he was near a first. From Oxford he had travelled at will through France, Italy and Austria, and roamed the English world of society and sport.

Such was the gifted and privileged young man who on the third night of his acquaintance with the beautiful girl whom Fortune had led to him at Cowes pressed his love on her. She admired his resource and verve not less than the social prestige that offered even at nineteen the door to England's palaces, and promise of fame. The Duke of Marlborough, his father—being a man of shrewd caution—hesitated to accept as final a proposal so impetuously made. If the Duke demurred, the American millionaire was too proud to show complaisance: and the engagement was held back for some months while Miss Jerome, writing from a Paris restless with political rumours, received long answers from her resolute young English lover. By the 15th of April 1874 all resistance was borne down; he married her at the British Embassy in Paris and started on his honeymoon. Earlier in the year, he had entered Parliament, having won the Woodstock by-election; later in the year he had taken his wife home to Blenheim, which sets the magnificent formality of its architecture above banks of bracken and a curve of shining water, reproducing at eight miles from Oxford something of the splendour which haunts her twenty colleges. Turner has painted it as after entering an imposing gateway one sees it; above a curve of water spanned by one Roman arch of a bridge, it raises, sumptuous and ample, its witness to two centuries of ducal dignity.

It was with the sense of great adventure and proud interest that the American bride of scarcely twenty found herself welcomed here: and it was here in this towered baroque palace, with its spacious formality, its royal associations, and its surrounding country calm that she returned after some months of unremitting labour in the choices, complications and variety of a London season, to rest in the pale blue and auburn of an English October. She had not been married more than seven and a half months when a sudden pregnancy was hurried to its end, and she gave birth to a seven months' child. They went back two centuries to that loyal courtier—who gave them the family motto of 'Faithful but Unfortunate'—the father of Arabella and John Churchill, to find the name of Winston: after the sporting newspaper grandfather in New York, they called him Leonard. And the Churchills were already Spencer Churchills. So then, as Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, did the elder son of Lord and Lady Randolph begin his life on the 30th of November 1874, surrounded by classic masterpieces, and high Victorian aristocracy, in a world stamped with the style of Gibbon, in the last magnificence of baroque.

The parents lived the life of gaiety to which politics added power and zest; but Lord Randolph suddenly fell out of social favour. His brother, Lord Blandford, had been caught up in an open scandal: his wife divorced him. Lord Randolph, with the sturdy combination of insolence and loyalty which marked his nature, took up his erring brother's battle, and suddenly found that Victorian London was snubbing him. The great houses no longer opened their doors, and Mr. Disraeli, who knew everything, was forced to sacrifice his young protégé to the very decided views of the Court of Queen Victoria.¹ For a season the Randolph Churchills sought refuge in America. It

¹ Lady Randolph Churchill, *Reminiscences*, pp. 68, 70.

was convenient in these circumstances for the Duke of Marlborough to be made in 1876 Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and for Lord Randolph to go with him as his private secretary; they therefore left Blenheim for the lesser splendours of Vice-regal Lodge in Dublin. The first things the boy Winston could remember were its gardens of shrubbery, the sense of the sinister element in Liberalism, and the menace of Mr. Gladstone, 'that very dangerous man who went about rousing people up, and lashing them into fury so that they voted against the conservatives and turned my grandfather out of his place as Lord Lieutenant'.¹

Children born prematurely have generally a lack of nervous, and sometimes emotional, equilibrium. It would not have been surprising if Lady Randolph, facing, while still so young, a life so privileged and brilliant as that which she entered, had had too few of the quiet hours and simple meals commended to expectant mothers; and in her husband she found a nature more mercurial and tempestuous than her own. All of this combined to disturb the nerves of her boy. He had to the full the brilliance of the Churchills but also their waywardness and temper, and to this he added the debt of leaning towards risk and danger to that American grandfather to whom he owed not merely his name of Leonard but also that strong admixture of heredity which a firstborn son commonly inherits from his mother's father. All combined to make him a bafflingly difficult child: and, to put it plainly, a very naughty boy. He was combative, impudent, hot-tempered; and he generally looked untidy, while his snub nose, his freckled face, and his pale red hair did nothing to redeem the effect of disorder in his clothes. Moreover, he had premature gifts that demanded a scope English life does not offer to small boys; he was 'uppish' and when he could not have his own way, he rebelled.

¹ *Early Life*, p. 21.

Our youngest years are moulded for us by women. And it was the fortune of this unusual boy to have beside him a woman to admire in his mother; in his Irish nurse, Mrs. Everest, a woman who understood and loved him. From her he learnt religion and love: he learnt to distrust Fenians and Romanism; and not least he learnt esteem for the poor. In his first novel, he has painted a picture of her plying him with questions and watching his appetite with anxious care. 'She had nursed him from his youth up with a devotion and a care which knew no break. It is a strange thing, the love of these women,' he added. 'Perhaps it is the only disinterested affection in the world: the love of the foster-mother for her child appears absolutely irrational. It is one of the few proofs, not to be explained away by the association of ideas, that the nature of mankind is superior to mere utilitarianism, and that his destinies are high.'¹ For long Mrs. Everest watched over his life. She came to visit him at Harrow, and with the loyalty of his nature he kissed her before the boys. When he came back from his first campaign, still he sought her out, and she inspired him with zeal for pensions for the poor. When the impetuous and naughty boy needed love, it was in Mrs. Everest that he found it.

In 1881 Winston was taken from the guardianship of Mrs. Everest to a fashionable school at Ascot, preparatory to Eton. It was commended for modern arrangements, excellent teaching and a tradition of dignified worship: it revealed one atrocious defect when pupil and system were unsuited to one another. The very day Winston arrived he was set to learn his first Latin declension, and since his memory was excellent, he learnt it at once. But what did it mean? *Mensa*, O table, for example: was it not sheer nonsense? A master explained that it was the vocative case, the case you use when you are 'addressing' a table, invoking a table, when to put it more

¹ *Savrola*, p. 44.

simply you are speaking to a table'. 'But I never do,' said the little boy. An immense reasonableness and an immense rebellion were in these words, and also more than a dash of danger.

4

In those days, it was thought good to whip boys far more often than now, and these small boys of seven, in accordance with a custom still current for young aristocrats of the time,¹ had their tender flesh bared to receive from the bound-up twigs of the birch a laceration that marked their shirts with blood. In those veiled Victorian days, the insidious luxury of cruelty to small boys could often pass disguised under the austerity and garb of discipline. Such a thing would happen two or three times a month, and not least often to young Winston. 'I experienced', he wrote, 'the fullest application of the secular arm,' and he resented it the more fiercely because in the same school was a chapel with the High Church services which Mrs. Everest had taught him were wrong. Here then was a small boy who needed the cleverest management in the world, who found his own thoughts his playfellows and would fight for their welfare against any odds; who for his fairy story dreamed already of a world where:

*Truth and justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing
Mercy will sit between them
Throned in celestial sheen.*

And who meant at once to have the good of things for himself. But if truth was compromised (as here it evidently was if

¹ We were freely thrashed with hand, cane and birch. I was scarred for life at the age of eight. Sir John Fortescue, *Author and Curator*, p. 14.

ritualism allured people to invoke tables) if justice was denied as evidently it was when such stinging and humiliating pain was visited on original vivacity), then pride came in combative and stubborn to the last degree. Sulking played hide and seek with mischief and impertinence. Nothing could have been more calculated to cultivate obstinacy, hardened by hatred, than to break by humiliation and pain the boy's tumultuous individuality. 'No Eton boy, and I am certain no Harrow boy of the day ever received such a cruel flogging as this headmaster was accustomed to inflict' on boys seven years younger than those at Eton or Harrow. Such was the fate of a marvellous little boy who could learn anything, anything he wanted to learn, provided it struck his interest as useful, or kindled his imagination to high adventures of the mind; but to brilliance, unreasoning drudgery is a bludgeon. And therefore again combativeness increased, and the boy, who had been prematurely born, grew ill, till, under a doctor's advice, he was taken to a kinder school at Brighton. But he was still a naughty boy: when he was asked if he had many mistakes, and if so how many, he would answer *Nein*; and then explain with injured effrontery that he was not giving a false number but cultivating German. 'I used to think him', said Eva Moore, then his preceptress, 'the naughtiest small boy in the world.'¹

In the first years that Winston Churchill was at school, his father had shot into the forefront of Conservative politics, and become Chancellor of the Exchequer. He did so by the exercise of qualities which heredity had transmitted to his son: the impulsiveness of a highly strung temperament, with combativeness, and with a gift for words bordering on the insolent; at once generous and eccentric, he caught the ears of the world even while he practised that art of dealing with a subject 'till he had reached its bottom' which had struck the attention of Mandell Creighton, who was by then Bishop of London. Now

¹ V. W. Germaines, *Tragedy of Winston Churchill*, p. 13.

in making Mr. Gladstone his butt, now in trying the temper of Lord Salisbury, Randolph had won his way as much by quip as work. With high temper and quivering nerves, he had the shrewdest judgement and the warmest heart. His lack of jealousy and his personal charm, wrote Lord Rosebery, arose from the same quality, that he was nowhere near perfection: that he was at once difficult and easy, pleasant and provoking, winning, petulant and outrageous.¹ Daring in politics, ready in debate, with an instinct for striking the people's fancy, such was the man who had been made Chancellor of the Exchequer, in love of the crowd invented Tory democracy, and in the course of his flamboyant success fascinated the imagination of his son. For thus are children made: their taste and pride alike flatter them to find perfection in those that have procreated them, and intuition worships till judgement cracks the imaged stature of the god.

5

Lady Randolph flashed on London as a rocket shoots up through black night to burst into coloured meteors. 'How dull men are!' Oscar Wilde once wrote to her. 'They should listen to brilliant women, and look at beautiful ones, and when, as in the present case, a woman is both beautiful and brilliant, they might have the ordinary common sense to admit that she is verbally inspired.'² She was lithe as a panther, fire shot from her eyes, and in her hair her favourite ornament was a diamond star.³ A woman of undaunted temper, she begot men children only, men children as she said afterwards who were at an advantage with women in that they came into the cradle fully armed.⁴ She loved life, and was not only passionate

¹ Rosebery, *Lord R. Churchill*, pp. 79, 81.

² Lady Randolph Churchill, *Reminiscences*, p. 217.

³ Lord D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, p. 35.

⁴ Col. Repington, *First World War*, I, p. 189.

but kindly. Yet fashion and luxury held her in thrall. When her son wanted to portray a woman divinely beautiful, he found his model in his young mother. 'Her perfect features were the mirror of her mind, and displayed with every emotion and every mood that vivacity of expression which is the greatest of a woman's charms. Foreign princes had paid her homage, not only as the loveliest woman in Europe but also as a great political figure. Her salon was crowded with the most famous men of every country. Statesmen, soldiers, poets and men of science had worshipped at the shrine. She had mixed in matters of State. Suave and courtly ambassadors had thrown out delicate hints, and she had replied with unofficial answers. Plenipotentiaries had explained the details of treaties and protocols, with remarkable elaboration, for her benefit. Philanthropists had argued, urged and expounded their views or whims. Everyone talked to her of public business. Even her maid had approached her with an application for the advancement of her brother, a clerk in the Post Office; and everyone had admired her until admiration itself, the most delicious drink that a woman tastes, had become insipid.'¹ Thus in the style of his father's friend, Disraeli, did Winston depict the American Mother who left it to Mrs. Everest to give him care while she combined flagrant worldliness with her own eternal childhood.²

At Harrow he did better than at Ascot. Dr. Welldon, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta and Dean of Manchester, saw that he had commanding gifts: and other boys saw that he had audacity. He had been not a month at Harrow when one day at the famous school bathing-place, Ducker, he found himself with crowds of naked boys whom, if they did not look dangerously big or strong, he would push into the water from behind. 'I made quite a habit of this,' he wrote, and in later

¹ *Savrola*, pp. 26, 27.

² Sir E. Marsh, *A Number of People*, p. 154.

years he referred to it as an experience hardly less exhilarating for the victim than it obviously was to the aggressor.¹ Once, however, he went too far. He had noticed a boy standing thoughtfully on the brink, wrapped in a towel. Coming up from behind with practised stealth, Winston gave this boy the usual push, while at the same time, with a characteristic mixture of adroitness and kindly forethought, he held on to the towel. The victim rose from the foam, irate and swift. In a moment he had regained the bank and, capturing his aggressor, hurled him hard into the deepest part of the pool. As he scrambled out on the other side, an agitated company of small boys warned him of what he had done. 'It's Amery: he's in the Sixth Form. He's Head of his House; he is champion at Gym; he's got his football colours.' Churchill perceived that not only was his flesh again in danger, but that, even worse, he had stained his young soul with the guilt of sacrilege. Repentant, trembling, but not yet wholly nonplussed, he sought out the naked potentate. 'I mistook you for a Fourth Form boy: you are so small,' he began. But the excuse was hardly less offensive than the original assault: so he added: 'My father, who is a great man, is also small.' To this flattering uncton, Amery replied in a milder tone, and signified that the incident was closed.² So did the boy—hailed by his fellows at Harrow as W.C.—first practise placation with one to whom he has since confided the office of Secretary of State for India.

He spent four years at Harrow, and on the whole they were not unhappy years. To those who know the school, and its spire on the top of the Hill, and its boys as they move on its unspoiled streets, worship full-throated in its chapel, sing its songs or play its games, there is an air of good-humoured sportfulness about the place, which explains how years after something from it is treasured. For it has its own prophecy:

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 308.

² *My Early Life*, pp. 31, 32.

*Visions of boyhood shall float them before you,
Echoes of dreamland shall bear them along.*

Winston took from it its combination of strenuousness and sentiment, vaunted by Vachell in *The Hill*. In this admirable school, boys intended for the Army are put in a class by themselves that, free from undue attention to unnecessary subjects, they may learn what Sandhurst and their future career will require. Churchill soon took his place in this class, with the more zest because from early childhood he had specialized in tin soldiers, and had indeed an army of 1,500 of them which he used to marshal against those of his brother John, a boy-five years younger than himself, and never destined tempestuously to arrest the attention either of schoolmasters or of the lords of Empire. Winston gained no glory at Harrow except that of winning the Public School championship for fencing, and a prize for reciting faultlessly 1,200 lines from one of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*. But his headmaster noticed not only that his memory was prodigious, but that there was another power there, the power of thought and words; the power which later flowered into genius; and when it came to passing into Sandhurst, he did well.

Before he reached Sandhurst, however, he had an accident. He had left Harrow to stay at Bournemouth with Lord and Lady Wimborne, she being his aunt. Two of their boys were there to play hide and seek with him in the garden. One day they caught him one at each end of a bridge over a deep chine: he jumped at a tree, but, misjudging it, fell thirty feet and ruptured a kidney. It meant six months of rest. Perhaps those were the more providential; for they gave the boy time to be himself, to revolve his memories, to feed his imagination, to rest his nerves. He had stored reserves of energy, and when he arrived at Sandhurst he opened a career of success, dealing with action and men.

If a boy leaves Harrow for Oxford or for Cambridge, as Lord Randolph had done from Eton, he finds himself freed for a life of something approaching leisure in one of the most beautiful towns in Europe. He combines the life of learning with the amplitude and amenities of a country house. At Sandhurst, the mellow beauty is wanting. It is a more Spartan life of drill and sport. The hours are long: but they were not without exhilaration for a certain cadet, for he found that instead of being prostrated by the routine of learning, he could master it and shine. In a single year he had completed the cycle of the Sandhurst hierarchy, become a Senior and passed out, if not first, yet eighth, into a regiment of cavalry; the background of lecture-rooms and the lake, of bracken, blue pines and golden stems, of all that air of wildness which still remains in that delightful part of Berkshire from the old royal forest of Windsor had been changed for a scene not so much altered at four miles away: the camp at Aldershot: but that it itself was but a ground to jump off into the high adventure of meeting every kind of available war, of learning how to write nobly on themes to catch the ear of those ruling the Empire, and becoming a personality able to assume as much with energy as ease the opportunities of a great political inheritance, the inheritance left by Lord Randolph Churchill when he died at the age of forty-five. For from the moment Winston Churchill joined the Fourth Hussars, he was recognized as brilliant.

But while he was happily filling his spare hours at Sandhurst with riding, or conducting a campaign against 'prudes on the prowl' who had tried to close the bar and promenade of that music-hall known as the Empire, in Leicester Square, Lord Randolph had faded away not merely from politics, but life itself. He had suffered in fact from cerebral thrombosis, that bursting of small blood vessels in the brain which is the

cause of paralysis, and finally of a general coma. Such was the disease which at the age of forty-three attacked the enterprising and dashing spirit which had tried to adapt Tory politics to the people, who could hold the rudder firm when the boat he steered was in the whirlpool, but who was little adapted for a long reign among the usual things. He had too much of that witty and adventuring bumptiousness which slang calls cheek.

Even Lord Salisbury had not felt safe with it; and as for Mr. Gladstone, it was not without cause that his solemnity was incensed. Had he not been all his life a great Churchman, serving in impeccable virtue and with high impressiveness the cause of dignified advancement in Church and State? Was there not something in the sombre fires of his eye which spread to his whole bearing and inspired it with grandeur as his organ tones spread from the speeches he rose to make, whether on platforms or in the House of Commons, with the same emotional reverberations, and the same sense of soul dramatized for action? But yet Lord Randolph mocked him, doubted him, held him up to ridicule: Randolph, when at Kissingen in the last year of his life had heard Prince Bismarck compare him to a horse whom no-one could ride on any bridle. That was bad enough: to compare him, master of English eloquence, to a bad-tempered horse, but Lord Randolph went one further, and said that in England people would often call such a horse a rogue.¹ And Bismarck smiled his understanding. Perhaps Mr. Gladstone did not hear of that, for it was written only to the Duchess. But there were things very like it which Mr. Gladstone did hear: good old Gladstone was openly denounced as a friend of the lawless, a foe of the loyal, a robber of churches, and finally as the Moloch of Midlothian—and such words made even on Tory ears the impression that here was something impertinent, something unbalanced, something unsuited to the sobriety of England. And

¹ *Life of Lord R. Churchill*, II, p. 479.

so gradually Lord Randolph had faded away, finishing his career in the Cabinet at the age of thirty-seven, and ceasing to count in the country at all after 1893. It was a symptom of his disease to blind its victim to the failure of his own powers. A creeping paralysis means a creepy cheerfulness, which accentuates to those around the tragedy which it disguises from the invalid. Such was the early end of Lord Randolph Churchill.

But just as Saint Helena gave an opportunity for creating the fruitful legend of Napoleon, so did the shortened career of Randolph prove an inspiration to the son whom he thought wayward, before it was discovered that his power of work was as laborious as his spirit was high. Lord Randolph lives in the portrait his son painted in two classic volumes which Lord Rosebery has assessed as among the six great biographies of our language.¹ They were a masterpiece of political writing and literary art, no less than of tact and taste. They set before us the picture of a gifted nobleman who from early youth was generous, loyal, and free, and gave the courage of his individuality to a reform of politics where the great traditions of Whig and Tory would coalesce in one great work for the advancement of Great Britain and its people. And who yet, even when with thinning hair and a walrus moustache, he held great offices of State, retained the pertness and incalculability of a thoroughly mischievous boy.

That was why when in pique Lord Randolph had as a gesture offered his resignation from the Exchequer to Lord Salisbury, Lord Salisbury hastened to take advantage of the gesture, and drive this brilliant but difficult young man—for he was still only thirty-seven—to urge outside the Cabinet his distrust of expensive armies and of a government voracious for the pounds of private men.

¹ Rosebery, *Lord R. Churchill*, p 11.

CHAPTER 2

The Hussar

As a subaltern in the Fourth Hussars Winston Churchill was at the beginning of fine adventures. For years the British Empire had, but for punitive expeditions against Boers or darker tribes, seen little of war: war was the great adventure that invested a man with glamour in the eyes of a sturdy trooper, an elderly officer or a beautiful girl. In these circumstances, a young officer was glad to seize an opportunity to see how the Spanish Army dealt in 1895 with insurgents in Cuba. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, for long Ambassador in Madrid, was glad to procure introductions for the son of his old friend Randolph, who duly arrived at the scene of this little war. The scene was romantic, but the going was slow: at last he found himself in an engagement with insurgents firing from behind a palisade, and now and then, a horse or soldier was slightly wounded. This was magnificent, and it was war. In an hour or two it was over and the column retired. Proud and happy at having had at least a spectator's part in a real, if tiny, battle, Winston now returned with éclat to his regiment, enriched by experience of a tropic island and the ways of Spain.

But his regiment did not long detain him. His real life was to join his mother in the hard but exhilarating exercise of the London season. He found himself well placed in a society which still had power, and where government itself deferred to the

arrangements of the rich. Society's leaders, Parliament's leaders, the leaders on the Turf, all were one. The House of Commons adjourned for the Derby and Lord Salisbury never asked the Cabinet to meet if it would disturb those engagements at Newmarket which most men secretly acknowledged as more important than any business of Church or State. There was still a society keen on riding and shooting which had not only wealth but power. While others did the drudgery, these people who drank vintage wines and ate delicious food, who rode well-bred horses, who had big or small game to shoot, who lived in ample space, who were dressed with an air and knew the good things from the indifferent ones: these people were still the governing class. Centred in sport, England, like most of Europe indeed, was an aristocracy. Such was the background and the treasure of this keen young Churchill. His American mother made it as interesting for him as anyone could. Rank for her was but one facet of the flashing diamond. Her delight was to know all the people who were doing things, the writers, the artists, the amusing and the creative people. All these were gathered at her table for her able son to meet. She was a prophecy of a later taste than that of the Victorian century: she was one of those Americans who felt the future.

And beside his mother, there was his cousin Sunny, the Duke of Marlborough, born to the splendours of Blenheim, ranking next to Princes of the Blood, happy to dispense from his palace a princely hospitality, a rider who sailed the high fences when none went before and none followed after, a creative connoisseur who preserved and elaborated his historic house and collection of treasures. This, wrote Winston forty years later, was my oldest and dearest friend.¹

He left London for Bangalore. Conveniently high in southern India to make the air pleasant to breathe and exercise a pleasure, it was chosen with Secunderabad in the Deccan for a

¹ *The Times*, July 1934.

cantonment for British troops in their task of keeping order in India. In their life in the opulence and colour of crowded India not too much attention was given to cavalry drill: the better training for a soldier's life was shikar and polo: and polo became to Winston, as to most subalterns, the regnant passion. The game mesmerizes youth: it requires a synchronism and sympathy of skill from eye and arm, from horse and rider: it offers excitement and hard exercise, not without the mustard of danger. It caters for rivalry and team-work, and as few can afford to play it it assumes at the same time the sacred prestige of a religion. It is something to ride on a galloping horse lance in hand to drive it into a tent-peg: a sport not dissimilar, with a living foe, is pig-sticking: but polo co-ordinates these arts in the regular excitement of a sport which is no game for nincompoops.

In the life of a cavalryman nothing is so. Winston knew that from his early days at Aldershot, when he had to take jump on jump bareback, with his hands sometimes tied behind him; to ride a hard trot bareback; to jump on to a barebacked horse at the trot or canter; and at an early stage of these events of endless jumps he strained the muscle in his thigh, the tailor's muscle, on which the grip depends. But the alternative to tearing an already lacerated muscle was to be thought a booby: and so the torture must be borne.

At Bangalore there was polo: there was the opulence and sun of India: there was the clang and pomp of cavalry drill: but more important than all these there were hours when the sun kept one indoors. Then it was that the brilliant young man began to read, and afterwards to write. He read books which challenged Christianity: for a time he was a pugnacious agnostic till the vicissitudes and perils of life showed him that he was dependent on a mystery beyond his understanding, and that this was one with the God to whom he had been taught to pray. Once again, in fact, Mrs. Everest was right. But the

young man read other things than these: Darwin, Malthus, Schopenhauer, Plato, and that edition of the *Politics of Aristotle* which his old friend at Harrow, Welldon, had edited; but he now received as model the flashing style from Macaulay, who in vividness and point added a French elegance to the majestic march of Gibbon: it was as precious to him, as to his lady mother a tiara of diamonds.

From there he went home on leave till he heard of adventures on the North-West Frontier, and induced Lord William Beresford to commend him to the General Officer Commanding, Sir Bindon Blood. Lord William, who had married Lilian, the widow of the eighth Duke of Marlborough, entertained him at the Marlborough Club and, to men who counted, introduced him in a phrase pronounced in the grand style: 'He goes to the East to-night—to the seat of war.'

He himself has written in that finished classic style of which he was soon to be a master the story of the *Malakand Field Force* which set out in 1897 to bring order among the hillsmen of the frontier and to push the power of Britain from India towards that barren extension of the Himalayas where the clear air sparkles dry into far distances, and the sun fills a gigantic scene with brilliant light. He has pictured how, among the velvet surfaces of these imposing hills, sudden rains carve out the nullah, how the tribesmen combine their allegiance to Mahomet with a taste for killing in a curious interplay of treachery and honour. He had related not only the circumstances, but the cause and result of the campaign, and, in an epic style, stated and resolved one of those imperial problems which was disturbing Lord Salisbury and his Ministers.

The attack on the Malakand was to be followed by an attack on the Tirah, and to go on with that required an additional fillip from Winston's lust for adventure.¹ A man avid for military expeditions wanted to join this too. Sir Ian

¹ *Early Years*, p. 173.

Hamilton, then a colonel, had spoken about him to Sir Aylmer Haldane, then a captain; then wrote Sir Ian to Winston: 'If you come up here, with your push and persuasiveness you might pull it off.'

Since this letter reached him after his team had been defeated in the semi-finals of a polo tournament, he was free to move without committing sacrilege, but, on the other hand, he could not get enough leave to go to Peshawar and return. However, he took the risk, managed to see the redoubtable Haldane, a Scotsman as shrewd as he was charming, and not without a dash of grandeur; push and persuasiveness did the rest: he was at once appointed to be, in his own words, the close personal attendant of the Captain of the Host.

Instinct restrained uppishness: kept him too shrewd to assert himself, until Haldane told him that the General had been attacked in the *Fortnightly Review*, and his Chief of Staff, Old Nick,¹ had attempted a reply. A general had in fact entered into journalistic controversy with a dismissed War Correspondent! The young man saw this would never do. It would embarrass the Government and infuriate the War Office. The defence of officers, he urged, must be left to the politicians. Haldane and the generals soon saw that he was right, and his reputation rose accordingly.

All that henceforth appeared on that campaign came from the pen of Winston himself. With zest, humour and the dignity of tact, he wrote his story. But though everything was expressed with soldierly propriety, there was a political undercurrent of criticism. For example: 'In their unnecessary and gratuitous proclamation, the Government of India declared that they had no intention of interfering with the tribes, or of permanently occupying their territory. . . . But the tribes took no notice of the proclamation. They did not understand it.

¹ General Nicholson.

They did not believe it. . . . Nor are they wrong.' That might have been enough, but later the subaltern wrote: 'Nor can any sophistry obscure it.'¹ In another passage there is an account of a tribesman watching from the hills while the British with their modern contrivances find the means of destroying the livelihood of these savage and impoverished men who had tried to keep their fastnesses inviolate. Not least interesting, there was an analysis of the phenomenon of courage in battle, and its constituents: discipline, vanity and sentiment.² The book was superb in the maturity of its style, in the power with which it gave an expedition the epic quality of war in the Empire's cause: but not to be mistaken, there was already the undertone of the political critic assuming by the sheer power of mind and principles the orb and sceptre, the fullness and finish of authority. It was the voice of genius.

Young Churchill saw the essentials and he set them down. He assumed at once the command of a situation and spoke in a tone which made generals look almost childish beside him. But the Englishman is human. So distinguished a work in so firm a tone from so junior an officer did not and could not please the ordinary general, or the ordinary captain of a squadron. Jealousy made the familiar accusation: 'this was not playing the game.' The young man who neither at school nor at Sandhurst had been too popular, had fresh reason to know that success makes enemies. But if this book made his brother officers call him a 'medal hunter' and a 'self-advertiser', if he was criticized for apportioning praise or blame to generals while still only an ensign, he had his recompense in a spontaneous letter from Lord Salisbury, admiring the book and adding an invitation to go and see him. 'I have read it with the greatest pleasure and, if I may say so, with admiration not only for its matter but for its style,' wrote the Prime Minister;

¹ *Malakand Field Force*, pp. 34-5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 299

'if I can be of any assistance to you, pray do not fail to let me know.'¹

Winston again set to work. The Prime Minister wired a recommendation to Kitchener that the young officer should join his forces, but K. said no. Then, however, Winston heard that Sir Evelyn Wood at the War Office was determined to assert his authority over Kitchener, who, as Sirdar, was refusing to accept the orders of the War Office about the British regiments attached to his Egyptian army. If Kitchener had refused to allow even into a British regiment an officer personally recommended by the Prime Minister, surely that would be an opportunity for Sir Evelyn Wood to assert himself: surely here he was safe against Kitchener. A lady friend set to work for Winston: and sure enough, two days later, he received a wire from the War Office saying he had been attached to the 21st Lancers provided he promised that neither travelling nor arrived, neither well, wounded nor dead, should he demand a penny from the funds of the British Army.²

2

The young man who had seen war at Cuba and on the North-West Frontier was now to go with Kitchener to Khartoum; he was to be transplanted from the palms and luxuriance of Bangalore to the palms and desolation of the Upper Nile, where thirst and monotony are enthroned together in the tyrannous Empire of the Sun. He was to survey from close at hand the work of Cromer, and the subtle diplomacy of Empire. He was to come in touch with Kitchener and find materials for his third masterpiece, *The River War*. For already at Bangalore he had written in the style of Disraeli his *Savrola*, where the democracy of Cuba was transplanted to Europe to provide the atmosphere for a political romance, in which the hero was

¹ *Early Life*, pp. 178-9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

an amalgam of what his father had been and what he would be, just as certain of his women were modelled on his mother and Mrs. Everest.

Sargent had drawn his mother, but here with intenser power than Sargent he painted the portrait of the Nile, 'a thread of blue silk drawn across an enormous brown drugget'. 'The earth', he added, 'is brown with the quenchless thirst of ages and in the steel-blue sky scarcely a cloud obstructs the unrelenting triumph of the sun.'¹ He pictured not only the blaze and attack of the sun on his shoulders, but the eerie quality of the moon, which among those sands has a quality to thrill and turn the brains of men; he pictured the evening when for a hurrying hour, the curious scene of sand and palm and river takes on the soft yet vivid shades of rose and violet, and glitters softly as though made of the texture of their petals—he hinted his own feelings as he surveyed this scenery, disturbed, alone with misgiving, with memories of disease and death. In vivid phrases he sketched the men and the events which made its history: Cromer, Gordon, Lord Salisbury, the daring Austrian Slatin, the turbaned, masterful and fanatical Mahdi swaying the religious feeling of the Sudanese dervish; and beside all these the man who had occasioned his father's quips, solemn, liberal Mr. Gladstone. He pictured the movements of armies and their engagements by the Nile at Abu Klea or on the Red Sea at Suakim. He paused for a moment to remember the disgusting effects of scurvy, the open wounds, the loosening teeth, the foul fungoid growths on men's limbs. And so he led up to the actual battles which Kitchener won, and the whole conclusion of the campaign. Kitchener he never liked; with a vividness which well reflects his feeling, he has told us how they first came face to face. He was ordered to report a movement of the enemy: he rode six miles across the sand: he saw five brigades marching forward in battle array

¹ *River War*, p. 2.

and at the head of them, under a scarlet banner, the Sirdar. Churchill rode round in a semi-circle, fell in a horse's length behind, saluted, and found himself looking into queer eyes, rolling out of almost purple cheeks, so deep was the sunburn and the red; he noticed the grave expression, the big black moustache, the lids falling low on keen cold blue eyes. He gave his report from the 21st Lancers, and then he reined in his horse while the retinue flowed past.¹

Thus he prepared for the battle of Omdurman where his regiment of lancers was in the forefront of the battle. In cool, but tense excitement, he rode with six troopers and a corporal up a slope of sand while dawn was breaking. With every moment the horizon extended until glinting in the distant plain near Omdurman he saw the weapons of swarms of swart Sudanese; and in the brightening morning they advanced with a mighty shout for Allah, for Mohammed his prophet, and for his holy Khalifa, while above them fluttered their flaunting banners of white and yellow and green. Then a message came from Kitchener himself: 'Remain as long as possible and report how the masses are moving.' A thrill moved the subaltern. Mounted on a fine grey Arab, in the elating air of morning, he was within danger from an advancing army in the sands of the Sudan, and he was again in touch with the Captain of the Host.

From the height on which he sat his Arab, he surveyed the scene, the crowd of dervishes with the spears and banners, advancing in order over the rises of sand, below, beside the Nile was massed the Sirdar's army and its great guns. In the river were two white British gunboats. Then, at a given moment, on the swathed and bannered host, the British, working fearful havoc, belched the flame and burst of shells. When the attack of the dervishes had been repulsed, it was necessary to find out, and if possible disperse, the troops behind the hills of

¹ *Early Life*, p. 192.

sand from which Churchill had first reported. Here was work for a regiment of cavalry: there it was, therefore, that the three hundred officers and men of the 21st Lancers rode up the hills and looked to where the bright white domes and minarets of Omdurman rose six or seven miles to the south beside the silken blueness of the Nile and its date palms, and between the brown glare of the desert and the blue glare of the sky. Then after halting while some horsemen rode out to reconnoitre, the regiment marched forward, twenty horses abreast, in column of troops. The enemy was awaiting them on their right; they wheeled and charged on a large detachment of dervishes armed with rifles and lances in a sunken watercourse. Churchill drew out his pistol. The trooper behind him was killed. He charged into the hollow, to find it filled with dervishes, but the pony went on and scrambled out of the wadi on the other side on to the firm sand of the desert; there more dervishes awaited him; he fired his pistol at them, then he found himself alone and with a sudden sensation of fear. He spurred his pony to a gallop and drew clear of the mêlée to find his troop awaiting him reformed in the sand and ready to engage again. And now he could judge something of the losses. 'A cavalry charge', he wrote, 'is very like ordinary life. So long as you are all right, firmly in your saddle, your horse in hand and well armed, lots of enemies will give you a wide berth. But as soon as you have lost a stirrup, have a rein cut, have dropped your weapon, are wounded or your horse is wounded, then is the moment when from all quarters enemies rush upon you.'¹ Such had been the fate of those in the centre of the charge, and now he could judge the result: he saw horses struggling on three legs, men thrown and limping, men with fish-hook spears right through them, with arms and faces cut to pieces, or bowels protruding from slit abdomens, men quivering, groaning, or writhing on the ground while their cheeks darkened as they bled

¹ *Early Life*, p. 206.

to death, as quickly as the desert darkens after the sunset has faded.

Churchill had asked his second sergeant if he had enjoyed himself. 'I don't exactly say I enjoyed myself, sir,' answered the sergeant, 'but I think I'll get more used to it next time.' The battle was not over: the wounded were attended to, and then again the regiment charged into the wadi to enfilade it. They dislodged the enemy, found that they had lost a quarter of their men, and some of them so hacked and mutilated as to be unrecognizable. And all this done before breakfast, which they now took in the wadi. Such was Churchill's experience of the famous charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, a charge which his dispatches and those of Stevens made glorious to an admiring Empire.

When it was finished the Lancers looked back towards the Nile, and saw that one of their gunboats had come up the river. It was commanded by a certain David Beatty, who related the impressive epic deed of valour in a homely comparison: 'It looked like plum duff,' he said, 'brown currants scattered about in a great deal of suet.' But Churchill did not hear of this till fifteen years afterwards, when Beatty had married the daughter of an American millionaire and had become an admiral, and Churchill himself was at the Admiralty as its representative in the British Cabinet.

Before he plunged into his career of politics, however, he was to have two experiences that counted. One was the time in Cairo when he was preparing his book, changing it from a journal of the campaign of Omdurman to a great classic on the ruin and rescue of the Sudan. Lord Cromer gave him that best help, a cutting criticism. It was Lord Cromer who encouraged freedom of the Press in Egypt, as an easy means of espionage. 'I always invite criticism from friends before I write or do anything important' he wrote to Winston. 'It is very much better to have one's weak points indicated by friendly critics

before one acts, rather than by hostile critics when it is too late to alter.' Cromer had seen the value of the enterprising subaltern's work, and showed the immense amount of trouble he had taken with it by the amount of corrections he proposed. Winston had never seen anything like this cutting criticism since he wrote Latin exercises at Harrow. But he realized what Mrs. Everest had read in the Bible, that 'faithful are the wounds of a friend while the kisses of an enemy are deceitful'.

Cromer, in fact, Winston liked as much as he disliked Kitchener. He saw in the British Agent a man who triumphed by sacrifice of effect, who, controlling with minute patience the details of administration yet keeping his eye alert on every aspect of Egypt's future, seemed nothing and was everything. For flamboyant as young Churchill appeared, he had chosen Cromer rather than Kitchener as his model. More of his hours were given to grasping details with unremitting care than to attaining quick effect. His work was solid, just as his book showed a careful and deliberate order. He freed himself from pointless detail, knowing that it is only the bore who omits nothing: and he learned from Cromer that the master of men is calm. Work on *The River War* went on, and his attitude towards Lord Kitchener of Khartoum became more open. 'I had been scandalized', he wrote in after years, 'by his desecration of the Mahdi's tomb, and the barbarous manner in which he had carried about the Mahdi's head in a kerosene can.'¹

Before the year was out, the attention of both these people, the general of forty-eight and the lieutenant of twenty-four, was to be drawn to the other end of Africa. The Boers, resentful of British claims, decided on war against the whole British Empire and on the 3rd of October they sent an ultimatum. And so began the Boer War.

It was hardly an hour old when Sir Algernon Borthwick, the editor of the *Morning Post*, came to Churchill with an

¹ *Early Life*, p. 242.

irresistible offer. He was to go out as their correspondent at the rate of £3,000 a year, and all expenses paid. Remembering that he had met Joseph Chamberlain staying with Lady Wimborne, when he had ruptured his kidney by that fall into the chine before he went to Sandhurst, he first secured an interview and obtained recommendations. Greater luck attended him on his arrival. He had hardly reached the little town of Estcourt in Natal when he found that *The Times* correspondent was that very Leo Amery whom ten years before he had incontinently pushed into the swimming-pool at Harrow, but whom he could now address in the terms of equality and fraternity. When he walked out into the rough little street of the town, he found, recovering from a wound, that very Aylmer Haldane whom he had won over on the North-West Frontier; and who almost immediately was to start out in command of an armoured train for a brush with the enemy up the line. An armoured train was one in which metal plates had been screwed on to the side of the trucks. It was, as it were, a precursor of a tank, just as the monkey was, in Darwin's view, the precursor of man.

So there was to be another real engagement after all. Although it had taken them weeks to get there, the Boers were not yet routed: had not the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Redvers Buller, promised them as much on the way out. 'I dare say there will be enough left to give us a fight before Pretoria.' In this, wrote Winston, the military instinct of Buller was sure and true, and if the war was not over before young men had had a chance to risk their lives, they owed not a little of this luck to their commander. Asked to what he attributed the success of his career, Buller answered: 'That is very simple—when I was twenty-one, my elder brother died and left me £10,000 a year.'¹ There were no doubt other reasons for his success; for, above all, he was characteristically

¹ Private information.

British. His contribution to military discussions was to grunt, or nod, or shake his head. Since he lacked the gifts of exposition, he was content to be laconic. But if he was silent, he was strong, and everyone trusted him completely as he plodded characteristically on from blunder to blunder, and disaster to disaster. For he never ignored the fact that a general, like his army, marches on his stomach, and if many men sacrificed their lives on the altar of his incompetence, they, like himself, were at least well fed before they were killed. His attention to commissariat, however, did not stretch so far as sanitary arrangements; of the 21,000 men who lost their lives in this war 14,000 died of disease.

Winston Churchill had hardly started on his armoured train with Captain Haldane, when at Chieveley they descried the enemy on the hill above them. In a trice the Boers wheeled up guns, and shrapnel was bursting round them. It was time to turn home, but as the engine hurried on at forty miles an hour, it crashed into a boulder concealed at a corner of the line, and two of the armoured trucks were derailed. Churchill worked valiantly to get these off the line, and at last the engine broke through the obstruction and rolled on loaded with wounded men. But several trucks were left behind, and it was no use leaving comrades deserted. Churchill turned back to see if the trucks could be pushed on towards the engine. He soon found himself on a line with cuttings on either side, and men firing at him from each end. His pistol he had put down when toiling with the engine: but he clambered up the bank from the line only to find his figure covered by the rifle of a mounted Boer officer. In such circumstances—alone, unarmed—surrender was the only choice; thus Winston Churchill became the prisoner of Louis Botha. When he was taken farther on, he found that Haldane and the men in the armoured trucks had been captured too. As a war correspondent taking part in an engagement, Churchill might by the laws of war have been shot

out of hand: but the Boers seemed too humane even to have considered that. They were in high glee at having captured what they called the son of a lord. After marching sixty miles to the rail head at Elands-laagte, the prisoners were then dispatched to Pretoria to be formally imprisoned. If Buller had promised them adventures before they had reached it, his word had certainly been made good.

But prison to a mind as restless and avid as Winston's was torture. Great things were happening and he was mewed up in a monotony that made the movement of the hours like a centipede paralysed. If you are a prisoner, your enemy can demand instant obedience to every order and since you owe your life to his humanity, you have no shadow of reason to resent what he ordains for you. The tumultuous spirit of Churchill hated this control with the same deadly hatred as he had given to that first school where he had explained that he saw no reason for learning how to speak in Latin to a table. The high air of Pretoria (for it is 4,500 feet high) made his nerves more taut, his heart more restless than ever. Immediately his brain seethed with schemes: the first was to combine with the sixty officers imprisoned in the model school and the 2,000 N.C.O.s and men imprisoned in the race-course, overpower the guards and capture Pretoria. But the senior officers, though they were not on parole, discountenanced the scheme, and it broke down. Before that Churchill had claimed exemption as a war correspondent—was he not captured unarmed? He was always equal to further argument with his guards.¹ But he could not press this argument in that the Natal papers boasted of his prowess in freeing the armoured train.

And so, before long, he and Haldane and another planned to make an escape together by climbing over a wall. The trouble was that these walls were guarded by armed sentries stationed at every fifty yards. Nevertheless at times their backs were

¹ A. M. Scott, *Winston Churchill*, p. 56.

turned, and a row of water closets provided additional hiding beside the walls. In one of these, the young prisoner, himself known to ribald companions as W.C., not only because he was Winston Churchill, but also because he was a War Correspondent, secreted and seated himself at a given moment on the 12th of December 1899. Watching through a chink of the wall of his hiding place, he noticed after a time that one of the sentries had stopped to talk to another. Here was an opportunity to scale the wall of his roofless shelter. At the top he was visible to the sentries, but neither turned to look. While his waistcoat was caught by the metal work at the top, he saw the glow on the hands of one guard who had struck a match to light a pipe. Then he extricated himself, and dropped down into a private garden on the other side while his heart beat fast and high. Haldane and another officer were to join him, but after an hour elapsed he heard them say on the other side of the wall: 'Come back: the sentries are suspicious: it's all up.' But he could not scale the wall on that side even had he wanted. The only thing was to sally out into the streets of Pretoria, and see what further he could do. He went out of the garden by its front gate, and walked on through the night to find the railway line which runs eastward 300 miles to the Portuguese colony of Delagoa Bay.

What happened was such a succession of luck that it can hardly be called other than a miracle. After walking for two hours, he found himself at a station and decided to jump up from the line to board the first train as it began to move out of the station. He flung himself at the couplings of two trucks, missed them, caught them again, dragged himself up, climbed over the top and found himself amongst coal sacks being carried back to a mine. He burrowed in among the sacks and slept.

Before dawn broke, he had awoken, and decided he must escape. He crawled over his truck again, decided the train was

going slow enough to allow him to descend, caught an iron handle and let himself down, as one does from a moving bus, and after two gigantic strides, he found himself bundled into a ditch, shaken but unhurt. He was still in the midst of enemy country, without a plan, hungry, and alone. His heart sank. In that high air, the nights were as chill as the sun, when it rose, was balmy. But at least no-one knew where he was; he had no idea himself. He walked from the valley in which he found himself into neighbouring hills farther eastward, and from there he saw a village and what looked like a Kaffir kraal. At first he thought he would board another train, but none passed through during the night. He was tired, hungry, exhausted. His position became more and more desperate. A gurgling vulture kept him hideous company. His usual habits of mind fell away, and another took their place. 'I realized with awful force that no exercise of my own feeble wit and strength could save me from my enemies and that without the assistance of that High Power which interferes in the eternal sequence of cause and effects more often than we are always prone to admit, I could never succeed. I prayed long and earnestly for help and guidance. My prayer was swiftly and wonderfully answered.'¹

3

As he walked he had approached another station, only to give up the idea of boarding a train; meanwhile his attention had been caught by the lights of another kraal. He moved towards it, but the idea of escaping with the help of Kaffirs seemed too futile. He began to walk back again towards the line; then he stopped and sat down. Suddenly his doubts disappeared; he must go to the Kaffir kraal: he felt without a

¹ *Early Life*, p. 296. He has told the story of these adventures, three times: in the *Morning Post*, in *London to Ladysmith*, and in *My Early Life*.

shadow of doubt he was being led thither by a mysterious hand. The lights which seemed a mile or two away took hours to reach, and when he arrived he found he was at the mouth of a coal-mine. It occurred to him that among these *might* be someone who for promise of money, or kindness of sympathy would help him. He went forward to a door and knocked.

‘Who is there?’ a voice asked in Dutch.

- He answered in English that he wanted help: that he was a burger who had fallen off the train and that he thought he had dislocated his shoulder.

The man took him in, and asked for more news about the accident.

‘I think’, said Churchill, ‘I had better tell you the truth.’

‘I think you had,’ was the answer.

The answer to it was: ‘We are all British here and we will see you through.’ He had come to the only Englishmen to be found anywhere in that part of the country. His host was John Howard, manager of the collieries, who had, as a naturalized Boer, been allowed to remain and work the mines. He was liable to be shot if caught harbouring an Englishman—but: ‘Never mind,’ he said, ‘we will fix it up somehow.’ And then they began to plot it out together, though there was a hue and cry all along the line. Meanwhile he must go down with his Scotch miners into the pit. Refreshed with mutton, and provided with a bottle of whisky, he found himself shot down a cage into the velvet darkness of the coal-mine.

For three days he remained there, hidden and alone but for the countless rats that made away with his candles, and for Mr. Howard, who brought him food. The lives of both depended on their secrecy, and there was suspicion at every turn. After three days he was taken from the rats and the mine to the back room of Mr. Howard’s office, where he was hidden behind some packing-cases, while a plan was worked out to carry him into Portuguese territory. A Dutch sheep-farmer

had decided to help. He would pack the prisoner among bales of wool on a truck: a tarpaulin would be placed over the lot. The risk that the bales would be examined at the frontier must be taken, but, as no trace of the prisoner had been discovered for many days, it was believed he was still in hiding at Pretoria.

Churchill decided to take the chance. And then he heard a sound of many rifle shots. The Boer field cornet had arrived. But not the worst had not happened. The field cornet had heard that Churchill had been recaptured, but to keep him quiet Howard had challenged him to a shooting competition firing at bottles. The field cornet had won £2 and gone away happy. That night Howard came for Churchill, and packed him in among the bales. The Boer sheep farmer set off with his bales and his charge. Then for three anxious days he waited while the train rolled slowly on. For hour on hour he waited at what he guessed must be the frontier, Komati Poort, while Boers walked up and down, talking. But the tarpaulins over his bales were never removed. Then his train rattled on, and when he dared to look out again it was to see the caps of Portuguese officials and painted on a board the name *Resana Garcia*. That name meant freedom. The escaped prisoner went wild with joy: he fired his revolver in the air. The succession of miracles had been completed: his prayer was answered: he was free.

Later in the afternoon, his train reached Lourenço Marques. At last the prisoner could escape from his truck: filthy and unkempt, he could mingle without difficulty among the loafers in the yard, and at the gates he found his Boer deliverer waiting to take him to the British Consulate, where, when he told his name, his unkempt appearance was passed over, and he was given welcome and honour. Later, arriving at Durban, he was received as a popular hero, and he kept Christmas with the British Army.

So ended Churchill's first two months of the Boer War. But more was to follow. After capturing him the Boer successes had not come to an end. Buller had further sustained his promises of a little fighting by suffering marked reverses at Colenso; other generals had been defeated in other fields: in fact it became perfectly clear that Boer horsemen who knew the country and had good guns were more than a match for inexperienced British infantry, and even the polo ground as a preparation was incomplete. Churchill, with his inevitable acumen and authority, saw what was happening, diagnosed the enemy's mobility, urged the need of a determined effort with a quarter of a million men, well sprinkled with irregular corps like the Colonial contingents, to deal with the Boers in their own way. He reviewed the whole situation and summed it up in the *Morning Post* in the words: 'We are fighting a formidable adversary.'

Meanwhile the doughty Sir Redvers Buller remained friendly. He received the escaped correspondent, and, as Lord Salisbury had done before him, asked what he could do for him. Winston would have ceased to be himself if he had not asked at once for a commission in an irregular corps. Now the C.-in-C. knew perfectly well that the War Office had issued an order that no soldier could write for a newspaper, and no correspondent could serve as a soldier. He knew they had done this because of the noise made by Winston's own dispatches from the Sudan. So this request put him in a quandary. Had he not been himself Adjutant-General at the War Office? So 'what about poor old Borthwick?' he asked, for after all it was Borthwick who had chartered Winston to write for him at the rate of £3,000 a year. Would Winston forgo that? And must the *Morning Post* be deprived of so brilliant a correspon-

dent? But there was a mesmeric quality about the young man before him that Sir Redvers found it impossible to refuse. He might have reflected further that the reputation of a general is very much a choice of a W.C. So, on the harmless condition that the applicant was to get no military pay, the General told the young man before him that he could have a commission in the regiment of Bungo, meaning by Bungo the distinguished officer, afterwards known as Lord Byng of Vimy, who at that time had been placed in command of the South African Light Horse. So putting a plume of coloured feathers in the hat worn by these contingents, Winston Churchill rejoined the army while breaking its regulations by still continuing to write about it as a master for poor old Borthwick and all the readers of the *Morning Post*.

Churchill therefore was not at the end of his wars. He was in the battle around Spion Kop; his brother Jack, now nineteen, came out to join him, and was wounded in the calf in his first skirmish, but the two brothers had many happy hours together. Lady Randolph had induced an American millionaire to finance a hospital ship, the *Maine*, and Jack Churchill was actually the first wounded officer to be brought aboard it.

Early in 1900 the war changed. Lord Roberts was sent out and began a campaign that changed the face of affairs as if by magic. And for years Lord Roberts had been a friend of the Churchills; Lord Randolph had had him appointed Commander-in-Chief in India. But, at this particular moment, Roberts was anything but pleased with young Churchill. For as war correspondent he had written an account of a chaplain discoursing to men about to charge about the downfall of Jericho, and compared this ineptitude with the excellent work of the Catholic Bishop Brindle at Omdurman. Lord Roberts thought this offensive towards the Church of England, and for some months maintained an inflexible aloofness. And later Lord Kitchener arrived; with some unpleasant memories of

what Churchill had written in *The River War*. But gradually these formidable difficulties were so far surmounted that Churchill, now as subaltern in the South African Light Horse—under Bungo—now as correspondent of the *Morning Post*, was able fully to watch the successes of the campaign and duly to chronicle it in that epic style, and with that rotund authority, which he had made his own in India and Egypt. He advanced with the main army up through the Orange Free State and over the Vaal river to Johannesburg, which he approached from the west in the column of Sir Ian Hamilton.

It now became most important to send a dispatch to Lord Roberts, who was approaching from the other side; but there was no road round the city, and to go round the way they had come would mean eighty miles. The Boers were still inside the town, but with his accustomed daring Churchill decided to ride a bicycle right through it. A young Frenchman named Lautré went with him as a guide. As he came into the town, he saw that there were still plenty of armed Boers there; he was no longer in uniform, and since that was so, he was according to the laws of war in the position of a spy. He had already escaped from the Boers once in distinctly difficult circumstances. He knew perfectly well what the result would be if he was captured now. And as they plodded up the main street, a mounted Boer with a pistol and a bandolier came up to them from behind. Again his heart beat hard. They tried to put the Boer off the scent by talking French: but he remained with them for a time that they felt was growing, like that of Charles II dying, unconscionably long. They had still to get out of the city, which they expected vedets to guard. But as luck would have it, all had been withdrawn. And ten or fifteen miles farther on they found Lord Roberts in his headquarters. An A.D.C. met them. They told him they had come from Ian Hamilton with a dispatch for the C-in-C. The A.D.C. disappeared while the war correspondent began to busy him with

telegrams for the *Morning Post*, but in a moment the A.D.C. reappeared with the words 'Lord Roberts wants you to come in at once!' As the lieutenant walked in dressed as a civilian, the Commander-in-Chief rose from the large round table where he was dining with the senior officers of his staff, and cordially stretched out his hand.

'How did you come?' he asked.

They explained that they had come right through Johannesburg and all its Boers.

'Did you see any of them?' asked Lord Roberts.

'Yes, we saw several, sir.'

Lord Roberts understood. He was a man with extraordinary eyes—eyes that could so blaze with anger that you saw in them hot yellow fire; at other times a steel grey glitter which had a most sobering effect on any that saw it. And now these wonderful eyes filled and sparkled with light to approve a deed of daring which brought him coveted news of Sir Ian Hamilton and his division.¹ 'While being most hospitably entertained,' wrote Winston, 'I gave a full account of the doings of General Hamilton's force to my father's old friend, and now once again my own.'²

Even so he was not at the end of his adventures. On the staff of Ian Hamilton he had found his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough. The Duke had shared the four-horse wagon during the long advance to Johannesburg: and once Churchill, admiring his cousin's daring and skill as a rider said 'If you had not been a duke, you could have made your fortune as a jockey.' The Duke, incensed that Winston had misjudged him, insisted that he was made rather to be the master of an old Curiosity Shop.³ Now the two cousins, with some other officers, went on together towards Pretoria; they were waiting at a level crossing when a train filled with armed Boers came in.

¹ *Ian Hamilton's March*, p. 281.

² *Early Life*, p. 364.

³ *The Times*, 2 July, 1934.

A shot on either side would have meant a horrible carnage, but no shot was fired. Then the two cousins cantered on into the town. They rode straight to the old prison, and saw the wall over which he had escaped. He raised his hat and cheered. British voices answered. But the guards were there with loaded rifles. The Duke called on them, however, to surrender: the prisoners rushed out from the yard, the guard did surrender, and amid wild cheers they tore down the Boer flag and hoisted the Union Jack. The war was by no means over, but the war correspondent had completed his task, resigned the commission Buller had given him, and went back to civilian life, once more to urge in unhampered freedom his criticisms of the Government and the war. His dispatches on the policy of Kitchener and the Government were getting so hot that the *Morning Post* decided to terminate the engagement. Young Churchill was advocating a generous policy towards the Boers, and fiercely criticizing the regulations which penalized them.

5

He was now nearing his twenty-sixth birthday, and had made himself famous over an enthusiastic Empire. His peculiar gifts had ripened in the brightest sunlight of experience. His greed for danger was temporarily satisfied, he was invested in the glamour of four wars in four years—wars in which he had himself done things which focused the eyes of all his Empire; his words had been weighed by governments while they thrilled all sorts and conditions of men and women; for they were words duly memorable as much for their sense of command as for the skill with which they were woven into an arresting story. He had with a happy combination of blood and judgement taken fortune at full tide, and added fame to the house of Marlborough.

And what was he himself? How much excuse was there for

this dislike, amounting at times to hatred, felt for him by certain officers from Kitchener downwards? Was his vaulting energy to serve his country or his interest? Both patriotism and ambition had mingled habitually in the Churchills' blood: and now with Lady Randolph for a mother, and Leonard Jerome for a grandfather, he was no longer all Churchill. He had in him much of the American *entrepreneur* to give him keenness, shrewdness, humour, an aptitude for advertisement.¹

Among great gifts, the dash of the cavalryman stood first. He was, in the words he borrowed from Macaulay, 'vehement, high and daring'.² But Sir Ian Hamilton was right to see with push persuasiveness. The young man's heart was warm and generous. Yet he could be judicial even in his dash. But there was always a current of egoism in the impetuous energy of his noble genius. Steevens had commented on an ambition which was not without cynicism. Winston disclosed it again in the portrait of himself he called *Savrola*. 'His nervous temperament could not fail to be excited by the vivid scenes through which he had lately passed and the repression of his emotion only heated the inward fire. Was it worth it? The struggle, the labour, the constant rush of affairs, the sacrifice of so many things that make life easy and pleasant—for what? A people's good! That he could not disguise from himself was the direction rather than the cause of his efforts. *Ambition* was the motive force, and he was powerless to resist it.'³ He saw with the clearness of the lightning flash those qualities of mind and character that would take the eyes and ears of the people, and his energy poured on like the flow of the Nile and its flood. 'At dinner', said the shrewd Steevens in Egypt, 'he talks and talks; and you can hardly tell when he leaves off quoting his one ideal, Macaulay, and begins his other, Winston Churchill.'⁴

¹ G. W. Steevens in *Daily Mail*, 2 December 1898.

² *Savrola*, p. 43. ³ *Savrola*, p. 42. ⁴ Martin, *Battle*, p. 37.

CHAPTER 3

The Young Englander

At every turn of his military career, Churchill, as he looked for adventure, had also had an eye on politics. With regard to every battle he had seen, he had written something to support or correct the schemes of the Government. Before he had even stood for Parliament, Steevens had prophesied that he would one day be Prime Minister of England.¹

What then were his politics? He had written of Savrola what was true of himself, that he had been brought up in the most correct regimental ideas: the people (by which he meant the mob) were 'swine'; their leaders were the same, with an adjective prefixed; democratic institutions, Parliament and such like, were all 'rot'.² Such, undoubtedly, in its Spartan simplicity, was the political philosophy of the mess in the 4th Hussars or the 21st Lancers: such in short was the conservative creed of the polo player. But just as at Harrow the young Winston, in the matter of Leo Amery, had stained his soul with inadvertent sacrilege, so among his brother officers he cherished secret heresies. There had been not merely that kerosene tin of Kitchener's with the head of the Mahdi inside, that Mahdi who was 'the most remarkable Mohammedan of modern times, and one of the most famous Africans the world has seen'.³ 'There had been an impression given by the Sirdar

¹ Martin, *Battle*, p. 37.

² *Savrola*, p. 55.

³ *River War*, 1st edition, I, p. 115.

at Omdurman that he did not want prisoners, and the result was that after that battle the British soldiers killed many of the enemy wounded.¹

And just as he had sympathized with the frontier tribesmen, just as in his way he respected the Mahdi and his dervishes, so he had in his heart a warm corner of respect for the Boers, one of whom, as we have seen, had saved him from the colliery mine and helped him to freedom in Lourenço Marques. If he had quarrelled with the pacifists while eager for battle, he certainly disagreed with the Jingoists at the close of the war. Even from Lord Milner he had heard that Boer and Britisher would have to live together to make a common country in South Africa.² If Harrow had not taken him far with Virgil he realized by now that the Romans had anticipated a good many of his personal conclusions and he could immediately agree with such a motto as 'Spare the conquered and war down the proud!' What was his motto for a war monument? *In war, Resolution: in defeat, Defiance: in victory, Magnanimity: in peace, Goodwill.*³ How seldom, he reflected, the man best suited to win a war is best suited to arrange the resultant peace! But nevertheless he was pretty confident that in himself this rare commixture was for once exemplified.

2

Such in fact was the balanced and elastic display of wisdom that he now sought to apply to the opposing ranks who did battle, not in the veldt of the Transvaal, but in the Gothic panelling of the House of Commons.

Before leaving for Africa, he had already contested the constituency of Oldham. He came back to contest it again, and before people to whom his story was now a reverberating thrill. Was not one of the very miners who had helped him to

¹ *River War*, p. 195. ² *Early Life*, p. 345. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

escape a man from Oldham? This exploit of his escape had been the first heartening proof of British enterprise and courage that had broken in on the monotonous tale of reverses and losses in the Natal campaign. Before such considerations, further discussion of politics was impertinent. Winston had entered Oldham in a procession of ten landaus to the tune of the conquering hero. A patriotic people realized what was expected of them. The constituency could not reject him now. He was launched at last on the parliamentary career which Curzon had sensed coming when he had entertained the young Winston at Calcutta. Curzon, though Viceroy, had the knack of encouraging the brilliant subaltern to talk on absolutely equal terms. Having himself been secretary to Lord Randolph, he saw in the son signs of powers hardly less striking than those which had made the father Chancellor of the Exchequer at thirty-five, which had made himself Viceroy at thirty-eight. 'I presume', he said, with that manner that was at once so cordial yet so regal, 'that it will not be long before we hear you declaim in the House of Commons,' and Winston already was strongly of the same opinion.¹

But he did not leave it to the stars to govern his success: he set hard to work. To be casual and leave things to chance is only another form of laziness: there was at least one thing he shared with Kitchener—it was the motto *Thorough*. He now applied it by the systematic work of canvassing, with the expert guidance of his mother, who, by the way, had lately begun a new life herself.

At the age of forty-five Lady Randolph had not ceased to be temperamental. She had been a widow for close on seven years when her eager nature had again caught fire with the instincts of youth. Ambition had been fully satisfied; nature remained; and she fell passionately in love with a very handsome man, young, in fact twenty years younger than herself.

¹ Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, p. 237.

Her new husband was the son of a famous beauty, that Mrs. Cornwallis West who was such a special favourite of the new King, Edward VII. His two sisters had married to rank and wealth worthy at once of their own dazzling freshness and their sovereign's concern for them: one, Sheila, to the Duke of Westminster, the other, Daisy, to the Prince of Pless. Such was the new family which Lady Randolph, in her impulsive ardour, now entered; and in the enthusiasm of these experiences, she did battle for her son, while he worked from hour to hour in visits and in meetings to secure the political confidence of the voters into whose midst he had been so eagerly received as conqueror and hero.

3

Against such a combination of romance, of experience and of skill, the electors could not resist giving him a majority. On the 1st of October 1900 Winston Churchill first became a Member of Parliament. Enormous work devolved on him at once. This time it was a general election that was developing according to the lengthy arrangement of the time. Churchill was wanted as a speaker to turn the scale in constituency after constituency. Everywhere alike his support was needed to convince electors that the Tory Government had not made a colossal mistake about the Boer War, and he summed his work at the end of the month when he delivered his first formal lecture on 'The War as I Saw It' before an audience of dukes, generals and successful Jews.

It was his attitude towards that war and its army on which his career was for some years to depend. The motives which drew him into it must be carefully considered. Ambition and adventure were of course always there: but he had also been convinced that the Boers were to blame for rashness, and therefore finally aggression. The fact was that since the Jame-

son raid they felt they could command the situation in an area where they were in political power and which, since the discovery of the rich gold-fields on the Witwatersrand, was attracting a number of Englishmen and Americans, not excluding Jews, until they were likely to outnumber the original Dutch settlers. A policy of compromise was possible, and to some extent carried out by both Milner and Rhodes; but after the defeat of the Jameson Raid in 1896 the Boer President, Oom Paul Kruger, had adopted a distinctly aggressive national policy against the immigrants. The Boers—the word is the equivalent of the German *Bauer*, meaning peasant—were on the whole a sturdy and vigorous type of Dutch Calvinists of the agricultural class, and Kruger headed an obstinate party which sought to gain every possible advantage out of the money invested by the newcomers, and the enterprise they had shown in development, while exploiting to the full the feelings of the original Dutch settlers in South Africa. Although therefore there had been justice in the Dutch case that they should keep their patrimony and not hand it over to foreigners whose only aim was to get rich quickly in a country to which they were not really attached, the Kruger party had overdone reaction and was itself not without reproach. It was the Kruger party who sent the ultimatum which engaged the whole British Empire against them. Churchill had summed the case up accurately in a few words. ‘Wrong in plenty there had been on both sides, but latterly more on theirs than on ours, and the result is war.’¹

Then his character asserted itself: daring and resolution in the prosecution of the struggle; obstinate defiance in defeat; but at all times a sense of justice not to deny either the strength or the virtues of the enemy. ‘Vigour,’ he said, ‘not rigour.’ And of the virtues of these Dutch enemies he was very sure: they were valiant and patient men; chivalrous in war, not

¹ *London to Ladysmith*, p. 113.

heady in success, and with certain qualities of the new world which his American connection made highly congenial. In a word, Churchill understood the Dutch in South Africa, and once they had been conquered, once Oom Paul had fled, he believed in showing them every possible generosity.

In the year after his election to the House of Commons, the policy of the Tory Government, of which he was a member, was so vindictive towards the Boers that it disgusted Churchill; his disgust was certainly not diluted by the fact that Lord Kitchener, who succeeded Lord Roberts in the command, was carrying on a merciless campaign against the Boers who still resisted. If Boers surrendered, instead of being treated as friends, they were put in gaol by Kitchener. 'If I were Kruger, I should approve and rejoice exceedingly,' he wrote. 'Beware of driving men to desperation: even a rat, if cornered, is dangerous. We desire a speedy peace, and the last thing we want is that this war should enter on a guerrilla phase. Those who demand an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth should ask themselves whether such barren spoils are worth five years' bloody partisan warfare.

'Peace and happiness can come to South Africa only in one way: through the unity and concord of the Dutch and British races, who must for ever live side by side under the supremacy of Great Britain.'¹

Kitchener was censured not only for his brutality to the Boers but for injustice towards an Englishman, a certain editor named Cartwright who had been accused in South Africa of libelling Kitchener. The libel consisted in copying a letter from *The Times* which accused Kitchener of instructing troops to take no prisoners. Although he had published Kitchener's denial, he was tried and sent to gaol. But even when he was released and his paper suppressed Kitchener would not allow him to leave South Africa for London lest he should repeat

¹ Scott, *Winston Churchill*, p. 72.

attacks. In other words, Kitchener was to dictate what men were or were not to hear in inviolate England. Churchill in the House of Commons as a Tory gave support to the vehement protest of the Radical, John Morley, at this outrage of British rights.¹

Such remarks from a young man of twenty-six who had just resigned a subaltern's commission were very strong words to use about a famous and popular hero of the Empire, who was at that time in command of the British Army in the field. And such remarks were disturbing, as well as distasteful, to the Tory Party, who had both initiated the war, and were pressing it on. None the less, he was an asset to the Government: for when skill in debate could save a reputation he defended them by arguments which carried weight with the other side. He certainly pressed for a vigorous prosecution of the war, such as the Conservative Party was bound to ensure—but with force he always wanted to mix in the ingredient of generosity. If he would have used more and better troops, he still admired the dauntless resistance of the Boers. He protested against the execution of one Boer commandant; he took steps which succeeded in averting the execution of another; he thought that the British soldiers who burnt Boers' farms were guilty of hateful folly. He was convinced that, having finished the war by efficiency, they should do so in the spirit of magnanimity and then return to that retrenchment and reform which made the ways of peace into ways of pleasantness both for the people in general and the taxpayer in particular. It never occurred to him that he should put party before what he felt to be true or right, or that he could possibly harm a cause by advocating virtue or exposing undeniable truth.

But Mr. Joseph Chamberlain took a different view: his contention was that the more mistaken a government was, the more loyally it should be supported. 'What is the use', he

¹ Scott, *Winston Churchill*, pp. 74–5.

asked, 'of supporting a government only when it is right? It is just when we are in this sort of a pickle that you ought to come to our aid.'¹

That, after all, is the principle of playing the game: that is what was meant by team-work. It cements the success of the British Empire; it yet has certain obvious elements of danger: for people who are very efficient there is no question what ought to be done when they see clear the essential facts; the disguise drops off from the truth. To tell the plain truth with vigour, to act accordingly with speed and strength inherent to the temperament and genius of a man who had shown his bent well enough at Harrow by proving a failure both at cricket and football and yet beating all the boys of England at fencing, who could not pass elementary examinations in Latin and yet wrote the best essays in the school. The result of course was that he could not fit in with the Tory Party, nor—as events were to prove—with any party; the first effect of this on his political mind was to move it steadily towards the Liberals, among whom he was appreciated like the lost coin which is found, where he had the glamour of the reformed rake. They began to agree with lovely young Lady Lytton, who said 'The first time you meet Winston you see all his faults and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues.'²

4

Yet not only had he the individual enterprise of Leonard Jerome, the American: but in the background of his life was the Marlborough tradition and the magnificence of Blenheim. Not only had he at every moment enjoyed each of those good things—polo not the least—which were the privileges of aristocracy, but the whole Churchill family was knit up in them,

¹ *Early Life*, p. 385.

² Sir E. Marsh, *A Number of People*, p. 149.

and still remains so. Of his aunts one, Lady Sarah Wilson, was a leading social figure; one had married Lord Wimborne, one Lord de Ramsey, one Lord Tweedmouth, one Lord Howe, and one the Duke of Roxburghe. His uncle the Duke had married a daughter of the Duke of Abercorn. His brother, John, in the same year as he himself married, was to marry Lady Gwendeline Bertie, a daughter of Lord Abingdon. 'I moved from one delightful scene and company to another,' he himself wrote, 'and passed the week-end in more beautiful places and palaces which were then linked by their actual owners with the long triumphant history of the United Kingdom.'¹ Beside all these connections, it was now thirty scintillating years since his mother had as a founder of the Primrose League identified the fortunes of her son with her own support—systematic in its perseverance, ebullient in its originality—of the Conservative Party.

It was then first as an independent and critical member of the Conservative Party that he in his first year in Parliament leapt forward to discuss and criticize the policy of any reform proposed by the Secretary of State for War, Mr. St. John Brodrick. He was in position to do so: he had seen war in all circumstances of the preceding years; he had received the confidences of commanders in the field; he had shown an extraordinary power of analytic and constructive genius; and while Brodrick was planning a larger army, part of which could be dispatched abroad at short notice, Churchill insisted that what was required was a compact but modernized and intelligent army. This enthusiastic cavalryman was very much alive to the dangers of militarism. He was violently opposed to the idea of high taxation to maintain expensive armies: it was on that very point that his father, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, had come to loggerheads with Lord Salisbury. He insisted in the interests of imperial prosperity that military estimates should

¹ *My Early Life*, p. 104.

not hang on it as a dead weight. What had been to the father a final idea was a fundamental one to the son. And the argument of Winston Churchill's first great speech was centred on the letter of resignation which his father had written to Lord Salisbury in 1886. 'I decline to be a party', so Lord Randolph had written, 'to encouraging the military and militant circle of the War Office and the Admiralty to join in high and desperate stakes which other nations seem to be forced to risk.' That was the principle on which Churchill began his career in the House of Commons. Money to prosecute war vigorously and bring it to a speedy and just peace, yes! Money to keep Britain and Europe on tenterhooks, no! Expenditure was always popular: but was the taxation to meet it equally so?

'*I stand here*', cried Churchill, '*to plead the cause of economy*. I think it is time that a conservative by tradition whose fortunes are strongly linked to the Tory Party, who knows something of the majesty and power of Britain beyond the seas, upon whom rests no taint of cosmopolitanism, should stand forward and say what he can to protest against the policy of daily increasing the public burdens'—and next he reminded them why Lord Randolph Churchill had sacrificed his career. That the Empire must be prepared for little wars, for punitive expeditions, was true: but a European war! Why, that would demand the whole manhood of the nation and the paralysis of peaceful industry. Such a war must be banished from their minds. '*A European war can end only in the ruin of the vanquished and the scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors. Democracy is more vindictive than cabinets. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings.*'

Such, long before Sir Norman Angell was ever heard of, was the speech made by Winston Churchill on the 13th of May 1901 in the House of Commons the speech on which his parliamentary reputation was founded. After that speech was

heard, one man after another began to say that he had heard the future Prime Minister of Great Britain and Ireland. What he feared was that Great Britain, embarking on schemes that would not make her invulnerable, would yet be tempted to be venturesome, and involve herself in dangers from which she would not have the power to extricate herself.

And what was the conclusion? There were two conclusions: *I trust the Navy . . .* the only weapon with which you can expect to cope with great nations is the Navy. With a Navy one can hold the enemy at bay until every strong man is a soldier and every city an arsenal. The defence of Britain is sure, and more than that against great powers of Europe was beyond our strength. We can no more win a land war against a great power on the Continent than that power can coerce us. Let them not crash between the two stools of a Navy dangerously weak and an Army dangerously strong. We must avoid, he said, a servile imitation of the clanking military empires of the Continent of which we can never obtain the military predominance and security which is desired but may only impair and vitiate the natural resources of our strength and vigour. That was the first conclusion to his highly reasoned eloquence.

What was the second? *There is a moral force.* There is, he argued, in mankind a faculty and power which, as the human race advances, more and more protects and strengthens those nations who inherit and cultivate it. Without that, no nation is secure, with it there was an influence so obviously making for the general happiness and welfare of mankind that none could dispute it. In that was a defence of nations both cheap and sure. Again and again Winston Churchill had read what Macaulay had written of Clive. Had he not also read what Burke had written at the close of his great speeches on Warren Hastings? Justice would survive as our advocate or our accuser before the last Judge when the globe was burned to ashes. Therefore he turned to justice and beneficence, to the healthy and the

kindly powers of British character. For on what, he had asked in *Savrola*, did civilized society depend? It was the system of alliances; it depended on the members keeping faith with one another, on the practice of honesty, justice and the rest of the virtues. To build up those was the only final defence of nations: had he been fonder of quoting the Bible he might have added: 'Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will trust in the Lord our God.'

The speech stands out alike for its close reasoning, for its lofty eloquence in the assertion of enduring principles, and thirdly for its appositeness. It was the basis of a career in which its principles, now on one side, now on another, were constantly to recur. It was the keynote of the Churchills' new contribution to history. Britain applauded. The applause took the immediate form of flattering unctiousness from the Liberals, and from the Conservatives startled consideration. The result was that in course of time both the War Secretary and his scheme were abandoned, and Mr. Arnold Forster was brought to the War Office to provide a new and better policy, the policy of Lord Randolph's son.

5

Individual as Winston Churchill was, he was not alone. Lord Beauchamp had at that time a brother called Hugh Lygon. A man who rallied to Churchill was Lord Hugh Cecil, a younger son of Lord Salisbury. There were others: Major Seely, Lord Percy, Ian Malcolm, Arthur Stanley, and at a benevolent distance George Wyndham. After Lord Hugh and Lord Salisbury called them the Hughlygons,¹ and others named them the Malcolmcontents after Ian Malcolm. And to the staid Tories, the connection with malcontents and hooligans was close enough. But they enjoyed themselves, and the

¹ Lord Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, II, p. 175.

leaders took them into careful consideration as a reincarnation of Young England. In them Coningsby and his friends lived again. They were bound to Winston by a direct tradition. For had not old Disraeli been Lord Randolph Churchill's patron, inspiration and friend? Winston was the immediate inheritor of that great scheme of functioning aristocracy, of an authoritative government saving the people from commercial exploitation which the great Conservative of Israel had preached to the early years of industrialism.

To these young enthusiasts was offered what was called by the man who offered it, a priceless secret. That man was a leading manufacturer in Birmingham: he felt the full weight and burden of foreign competition, especially from an ambitious Germany. Joseph Chamberlain's idea was to exclude this danger by customs restrictions. Tariffs! This word was to lead to violent antagonism between the old leader who proposed it and the young leader who listened. Chamberlain with his long experience of both business and politics knew what he was about; he was sure that he could appeal to both the national traditions and the business interests of the Conservatives. There was some hostility among them, to be sure. The Duke of Devonshire, Lord George Hamilton, Mr. Ritchie, the Member for Dundee, all resigned. And Winston Churchill, who had already become pugnacious against the policy of Kitchener, who was receiving more and more compliments from the Liberals, moved swiftly into the opposing camp. Already on the 11th of November 1903 he and Hugh Cecil were speaking together at Birmingham for Free Trade. Nevertheless his tastes and traditions remained those not of Campbell-Bannerman, but of Disraeli and Lord Salisbury.

Was the secret of the power of his personality equal to the genius of his speech? Had he the regnant power of calm? Had he the equilibrium which alone commands the allegiance of the Briton? Could he persuade the people that his changes of view were made with that deliberation which convinces them silently when persuasion fails? Such qualities as these were not bequeathed by either Leonard Jerome or the Duke of Marlborough. The famous general had been anything but solid. He was averse as much by character as by principle from defensive warfare, he conquered by his vigilance and activity. Moving with swiftness to surprise, and highly original in his combinations, he won his decisive battles by sudden and strong attacks.¹

Such certainly was the parliamentary method of Winston, his descendant. But no-one would guess to look at this young man that as a dashing cavalryman, he traced two centuries of descent through Dukes of Marlborough and their successful marriages with the proudest and most powerful families. Winston Churchill had never been good-looking. The snub nose, the carrot hair, the full uncurved lips, the pale eyes, all forbade that. His shoulders indeed were broad, his frame strong, and his stature large enough. But already at twenty-six, after years in the army, he had lost all traces of martial bearing. He walked with a stoop, and the broad shoulders were rounded, the head drooped forward, the face was pale, the light blue eyes were strained and tired, and with extraordinary swiftness the full lips were becoming something more than firm, they were compressed into an expression of combativeness, which yet looked slightly petulant. Nor was

¹ Coxe, *Marlborough* (1818), I, p. 5.

his voice easy: on the contrary, he had a curious impediment which turned the letter 's' into a hoarse and wheezy sibilance; he had therefore to speak slowly, carefully, fighting his impediment as he spoke. To none did he give that picture of radiant energy, or high nobility, which had spoken of noble strength in every aspect and gesture of certain eminent Victorians, of the Victorians painted, for example, by George Richmond. For Winston was even less liked by the hated Gladstone than his father. But at times, as he spoke, his aspect seemed to catch a spark from the literary splendour of his words: he would raise his head, his voice would rise, his cheeks would take on colour, his eyes would light and shine. But his words with their power were built by the effort of study, and his genius as an artist could not claim to be an overflow of heaven's profusion. Rather was it the sustained effort with which his honest soul supported the combative and at times self-willed furies of a temperament which lived for mastery through the driving force of words.

7

It would be misleading at this point not to refer to a phase of social history. It was a time when high society was more active and luxurious than at any time before or after. Great Britain was enjoying immense wealth. Taxation was still low, and people could both spend and invest. The accession of King Edward and Queen Alexandra had placed at the head of society a generous and magnificent Court. Entertaining was lavish to the last degree. The rate of eating and drinking in high society was very high indeed. The King himself was an immense eater. The richest cooking, the noblest wines, the finest champagne strained many digestions, and tended both to stimulate and exhaust temperaments highly strung. The advent of the motor-car added to the rush of a life already packed by its own

elaborations. The restraints and discipline of Victoria's long reign were being rapidly broken down. Sport was still maintained on the grand scale, and bridge was played more and more. All these occupations and interests were enough to cram and even weary leisure, for culture and taste were still maintained. But Winston Churchill was not living a life of leisure. Consumed by a political ambition, his nature involved him in additional conflicts with his own party; nor was that all, he was still, as writer, an artist, and busy with that masterpiece, his life of his father. Who can wonder if, with this combination, the nervous and excitable young man lost his freshness, looked older than his age, and showed in a pallid fleshiness the results of late nights and high living? He did not always charm, nor even seek to charm. Once at a dinner-party one young lady said to him: 'I care for neither your politics nor your moustache.'

'Don't distress yourself,' he answered. 'You are not likely to come into contact with either.'¹

8

Beside the rate of social living, Churchill had another reason for strain. It was the lack of private means. His mother allowed him £500 a year, though she could have found ample use for it herself. He had certainly made money as well as fame as a writer, but what with polo ponies and an election, it had all been spent. He decided in these circumstances to give a lecture tour in America. His exploits and writings alike promised him success. Family helped. His audiences were crowded. In the course of a long and tiring tour, he made £10,000. This sum, invested with the aid of his father's Jewish friend, Sir Ernest Cassel, put him in funds for many years;² though he always lived well beyond his income, and the sum, even with

¹ *Anecdotes of the Hour*, p. 15.

² *My Early Life*, p. 376.

Cassel's accretions, dwindled. But for the time being, with £10,000 in hand, one source of exhaustion was extinguished.

In America he was not the only Winston Churchill. By an arresting coincidence, his rise to fame coincided with the success of a novelist of the same name, born, like Mr. T. S. Eliot, in St. Louis, Mo. So both Churchills were not only Winstons but writers. How prevent confusion? The son of Lord Randolph wrote the following letter to the son of St. Louis:

'Mr. Winston Churchill will recognize that there is grave danger of his works being confused with those of Mr. Winston Churchill. He feels sure that Mr. Winston Churchill desires this as little as he does himself. In future, to avoid mistakes as far as possible, Mr. Winston Churchill has decided to sign Winston Spencer Churchill, and not Winston Churchill as formerly. He trusts that this arrangement will commend itself to Mr. Winston Churchill, and he ventures to suggest with a view to preventing further confusion which may arise out of this extraordinary coincidence that both Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Winston Churchill should insert a short note in their respective publications explaining to the public which are the works of Mr. Winston Churchill and which those of Mr. Winston Churchill.'

This reasonable and accommodating proposition was accorded the reception it deserved; so when in 1900 Mr. Winston Churchill visited Boston, Mr. Winston Churchill was the first to welcome him. The American entertained the Anglo-American at a banquet which the guest described as very gay. Each made complimentary speeches to the other. Some confusion, however, still persisted. The Englishman's letters went to the American's address, while the guest who had lost his letters found himself receiving the bill for the dinner at which he had been entertained. Then American enterprise defeated American confusion, and all was well.¹

¹ *My Early Life*, p. 231-2.

CHAPTER 4

The Lead of Rosebery

For career, Churchill's life was in the House of Commons, and its ramifications. His opposition to St. John Brodrick on the Army Scheme had been obviously a matter of competence and conviction. But it was plain that something temperamental had also come in, the individuality of the fencer, the sheer lust of the battle, and the overflow of ebullience into a certain superfluity of naughtiness. For him self-effacement, like reserve and punctuality, was *ultra vires*.¹ In the matter of the army, the line taken had been generous and constructive: the result was that it had been accepted. But before long another policy arrived which soon divided Churchill from the party. It was, as we have seen, Joseph Chamberlain's contribution of tariffs against free trade. It became the chief political issue of succeeding years.

'By that time most countries had fenced themselves in with customs duties. England had some, of course; but Mr Chamberlain proposed now that there should be more. Principles were invoked; after a preliminary period labelled 'inquiry' other names were chosen—retaliation, protection, Imperial preference, fair trade, regard to the working man. All were by

¹ 'I realized that I must be . . . punctual, subdued, reserved, in short display the qualities with which I am least endowed.' *My Early Life*, p. 107.

liberals fiercely denied. It was asserted that they were all a means of adding to the resources of the wealthy and would weigh upon the poor. And at this time, Winston, who, though a generous, was by no means a selfless creature, began to think a good deal about the poor. Perhaps it was gratitude to Mrs. Everest, perhaps it was recalcitrance to unsympathetic Tories: perhaps it was a sense that the liberal tide was coming in, and these ideas would have an irresistible momentum. Whatever the reason, he soon placed himself on the Liberal side and developed the free trade arguments with zest, ingenuity and vigour.

He first came forward as early as the 22nd of June 1903 to argue for the needs of the labourer in the matter of repealing the Corn Tax. He argued that corn and wheat must come into England as cheaply as they could. He came forward to combat those unhealthy appetites for privilege, preference and protection 'which bode so ill to the continued prosperity of our country'. The following month his speciality was sugar, and he had mastered the details of the sugar trade and all its effect on the national life in the matter of jam, biscuits, soda water, chocolate. He then enunciated a truth of that important sphere where commerce impinges on health: *sugar attracts fruit*. He spoke of the comfort and strength of sugar. But sugar, if it were taxed, had an importance more than any of these: it became a symbol of a sinister principle. 'Vast industries of poor people artificially stimulated, exciting considerable political power, and using that political power to maintain and even increase the artificial stimulation: giant trusts enjoying a complete monopoly of the home market, making enormous profits out of the home consumer, and no doubt using the wealth thus obtained still further to influence the Government machinery. As a result of this state of things—over production on a prodigious scale: cut-throat competition between the lists for the free English market, enormous exportations at

unprofitable prices and encouragement by the foreign governments of this unprofitable exportation.¹

By an amazing instinct the young statesman had diagnosed through this symptom of a sugar policy the second principal malady of Europe. The first, as we have seen, was armaments; the second was economic nationalism. Both, if he had thought further, were the result of the very system that was now attacking them: of that liberalism which, by making the vote the supreme arbiter, left it to cunning men to organize not only directly the vote, but also the newspapers, and all the devices of political machinery, till it led to nationalism first in tariffs and then in armies to protect the tariffs: or sometimes first to armies and then to tariffs to provide the armies.

But it was much later in his career before Churchill was to trace things out as far as that. At present he saw liberalism administering a prophylactic to the disease it unconsciously spread, and he was about to attack the disease. He flung himself, then, with all his ardour into the whole subject of free trade, and in an impressive succession of speeches argued its case with all the fullness and finish of his eloquence. Retaliation, dumping, preference, protection, he dealt in order with them all.² This logical development of his position soon brought him into conflict with the Tory machine at Oldham; he became an independent member; and then seeing that Oldham was impossible, he began to look round for a constituency where he could contest the next election as a Liberal. He found it in North-west Manchester.

Perhaps the most decisive moment in his change was on the 27th of March 1904. On that day as he got up to speak at tea-time, it would not have been unnatural if some members had moved out to refresh themselves, and some moved out doubt-

¹ House of Commons, the 29th of July 1903, reprinted in *For Free Trade*, p. 19.

² See *For Free Trade*, passim.

less simply to take the cheering cup—with or without untaxed sugar. But to others it was even more reviving to snub the recalcitrant. Before anyone quite knew what had happened 235 Conservative members had walked out as Winston was beginning to speak. Churchills notice such things and do not quickly forgive them.

2

As his politics moved from Conservative to Liberal, he naturally reviewed his relation to the big men in either party. By the Tories, whether Chamberlain or Balfour, he had been treated with full consideration. But the welcome was coming from the other side. Liberal politics, under the influence of Mr. Lloyd George, were beginning to move more sharply to the left: but there was still among the liberals an elder statesman to represent the great Whig families in the full Marlborough sumptuousness.

Lord Rosebery had been in 1895 Prime Minister. His political experience was combined with the tastes and traditions of the highest privileges. He had several superb estates and a fine house in Berkeley Square: he had the tastes of the *grand seigneur*, enjoying racing and shooting, and wines, and cooking, and culture. In two successive years he had won the Derby. He was not merely a Liberal leader but an epicurean, a connoisseur and a scholar married to a handsome Jewess of that family which Disraeli vaunted, he led a life which was the epitome of luxury. Like Charles II, he had 'a pleasant, affable and recommending wit', and with all these claims on the personal tastes of Winston Churchill, he had been, both at Eton and Oxford, Lord Randolph's greatest friend. It was therefore inevitable that as soon as Winston began to write his father's life he should turn to Lord Rosebery, and that Lord Rosebery should welcome and support the fine work which his friend's son was doing. In these circumstances of ample sympathies

and wide persuasiveness, Winston Churchill changed his political allegiance.

What then was Lord Rosebery's view of politics? He was not at one with the official Liberalism—far from it; but on the other hand, though freed from the narrower polemics of party, he saw the Tories were in the slough. For ten years they had been in control of the greatest Empire in the world at the climax of its wealth and opportunities. Neither Caesar nor Tsar ever swayed realms so opulent, or disposed of such harnessed exploitation of resource. But could it claim, asked Rosebery, that it had benefited the people as a whole? On the contrary, he argued that it had plunged thoughtlessly into a long and inglorious war which had made England a hated name in Europe. The War Office was cumbersome. The taxes had risen in eleven years from £94,000,000 to £140,000,000. And now Joseph Chamberlain was going to tax the children's bread! Lord Rosebery was determined not to mix the sublime idea of Empire up with that: he wanted by cheap living to keep the whole world as Britain's market. But he wanted a reformed party sharing the best of Tory ideas, a party which neither bound their foreheads with the fly-blown phylacteries of obsolete policy, nor mumbled catchwords like incantations to cover their vacancy of thought. He wanted a party enriched by fresh minds and the enterprise of a high originality, in fact a party which would despise party—party, with all its tricks and all its narrowness, and all the barren discussions of a futile competition for the voters' favour. 'A plague on both your houses!' cried Lord Rosebery. 'A plague on all your policies. Have done with this unending talk and come down and do something for the people.'¹

Such was the appeal to Britain which Winston Churchill heard and answered. Under the leadership of Lord Rosebery

¹ This passage is based on the epitome of Lord Rosebery's opinions in *Coming Men on Coming Questions*. W. T. Stead, 1905.

he became a Liberal—Lord Rosebery, his father's friend, Lord Rosebery, the master of princely entertaining in delightful houses, Lord Rosebery, associated by marriage with the highest Jewish finance, Lord Rosebery, the artistic man of letters, Lord Rosebery, who gave his leisure to collaborating in Winston's noble monument to Lord Randolph, his father.

If the veteran Whig was extending an invitation to coming men, Winston would come forward and voice his own ideal of a policy transcending party yet combating Chamberlain. He was an imperialist, yes, but an enlightening imperialist legislating for the 'whole world's advantage: 'our parliamentary institutions, our jurisprudence, our orderly yet democratic methods serve as patterns to the most enlightened peoples. Look where you will, you will see at every stage on the long and dangerous path on which we have moved from the condition of a small poor island people to the enjoyment and responsibility of world-wide dominions, it has been written in letters of shining gold:

THE VICTORY OF BRITAIN MEANS THE WELFARE OF THE
WORLD.¹

Such was the ideal which Winston Churchill now came forward to argue with all that subtle application of the ideals of universal benevolence and the welfare of England's poor to particular details of taxation which were the new arguments added by the free traders to the Liberal stock. The theatre for his piece was one of the finest in history. It was a society living in extreme amplitude and the enjoyment of proud tradition mingled with elasticity and a welcome to new minds, new wealth. The people who led this society lived and moved, like Lord Rosebery, on a superb scale. They stood forward in the nation, eminent and admired: they might have done anything, but they gave themselves in all their grandeur to endless pre-

¹ *Coming Men*, p. 13.

occupation with ephemeral and impertinent things. It was, said Churchill afterwards, an age of great men and small ideas, where the life of the nation moved beneath the party quarrels, as a turbid river can flow beneath agitated froth.¹

3

For as we look back at it now, it presented an appalling contrast between the few with privilege and power and the industrial masses. It was a country organized as a paradise for the rich, and something like a hell for the poor. The sordidness of England not only in the dreary miles of slum in town after town in Durham, in Yorkshire, in Lancashire, in the Black Country, in the ports, above all, of course, in London—but even in the miles of shapeless yellow brick where the middle classes made their homes, surpassed that in any country in or out of Europe, not excluding America. Nowhere in the wide world did the people breathe such polluted and grimy air. Nowhere were they so ruthlessly cut off from the life-giving powers of sunlight, and of the sea, and from the scented healing breath of the forest. The people of England offered work, heroic patient work for wages, wages to buy their clothes and food and drink to satisfy the simplest animal needs; to consume and to breed that their children might continue consuming. They gained nothing from the extension of space: they lived a less healthy life than the ancestors who lived in an age when an orange was as rare as an elephant.

Lethargic England ate very carelessly—except for that favoured few.

The greatness of England was not in her people but in her wealth. That performed portentous tasks. It brought emeralds from the cordilleras of Colombia, and rubies from the mines of Burma to sell them to the wives of manufacturers in

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 231.

the Rue de la Paix; for it the stubborn oyster disgorged its orient pearl. It hurled water with such force against the rocks of the Southern Alps as to force them to open to the New Zealand engineers their secreted gold. For it the handsome Valencian grew his oranges on the scented groves of Denia and the Kaffir carved the earth of Griqualand West to give a glitter to American tiaras in the drawing-rooms of Grosvenor Square. Such was the kind of enterprise for which the £10,000 of Winston Churchill was employed by the sagacity of Sir Ernest Cassel. Such, with petrol and beer, were the means which added money to the long rent-rolls of Lord Rosebery. He and Churchill shared a gift of imagination that saw how between the privileges of wealth and the sordidness of poverty some middle must be found. For the bond between them was still Lord Randolph.

Rosebery indeed reminded Winston that Randolph was not keen on the Liberals: 'I can see', Randolph had said, 'the viscous slimy trail of that political reptile which calls itself the Whig Party gleaming and glistening in every line of it. I see that most malignant monster endeavouring, as it did in 1832, to coil itself round the constituencies of England and to suppress the free action and to smother the natural voice of the English people.' Well, Lord Rosebery thought that was going too far. Would it not have been better to compare the poor old Liberal Party not to a boa-constrictor but to a slow-worm?

Lord Rosebery had his own little naughtiness just at a point when Winston was propriety itself. At Eton it is no stigma to be called a 'scug', for most Etonians are such; but the word does not sound well, and Winston would not let it disfigure his volume. Very well, let filial loyalty have its way. Lord Rosebery would withdraw his contribution, not, of course, permanently, but to publish it elsewhere. The young artist should design and build a monument all his own. But while Lord Rosebery appeared to give way on these personal matters, he

had won his young friend over into his political fold. It was finally more as Rosebery's pupil than as Randolph's that Winston was to rise to political power.

4

He became Member for North-west Manchester in that election of 1906 when 512 Liberals were returned against 178 Conservatives, and was immediately made Under-Secretary for the Colonies, his chief being Lord Elgin. Two years later he succeeded Mr. Lloyd George as President of the Board of Trade, a tribute to his vigorous work against Chamberlain in tariffs. In 1910 he was to be made Home Secretary. A year later, he was changed over to the Admiralty. Such is the impressive record of his official career as a Liberal. Full tribute had been paid by Asquith to his outstanding gifts, and it seemed more certain than ever that in due time he would become, as Massingham had suggested already in 1901, Prime Minister, and Liberal Prime Minister, of England. Even Chamberlain had acquiesced in the change. In 1905 Winston had written to him asking for some letters of Lord Randolph's. Chamberlain, though he had by then felt the full opposition of Winston on the subject of free trade, graciously responded first by asking his opponent to dinner and then by bringing out at dessert a vintage port of seventy years before: but even that had not been his final courtesy. 'I think you are quite right,' Chamberlain had said, 'feeling as you do, to join the Liberals. You must expect to have the same sort of abuse flung at you as I have endured. But if a man is sure of himself that only sharpens him.'¹

And who were the colleagues among whom in these years of steadying power he deployed his mighty energies in action and reaction? The Liberal Cabinet of those years was bal-

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 74.

anced by Asquith between great landlord Whigs and rising men of the middle classes. Lord Crewe was at one extreme, Mr. Lloyd George was at the other. The barristers, Lord Loreburn, Lord Haldane, and Mr. Asquith himself kept balance between, with Lord Morley beside them as a man eminent in the dignity of culture. They were vital and in their way constructive minds, centred on the house of a Prime Minister who took nothing too seriously, and whose central maxim was 'Wait and see!'

Mr. Asquith had now gone far from the days when he wheeled his first wife's perambulator along the pavements of Hampstead, still further from those when as the son of a poor Nonconformist widow he had taken his daily task to the City of London School on the Embankment. He was now an elder statesman, married to a lady with a tight lip, a high heart, a brain eager for new worth and an undergoing stomach. In her youth, this lady, daughter of a successful manufacturer in the North, had been known as one of those interesting young women in the best society who called their company 'The Souls'. Her sister, while she lived, had been married to Alfred Lyttelton; and the Asquith family moved, as it were, on the top of the wave, ready at all times to do the more interesting things in the more interesting ways. So in the height of his success was that paragon of animals, the barrister who from small beginnings had made his way to a dignity commensurate with his power. Mr. Asquith lived well; his fluent speech combined a felicitous style with a judicial authority; but he had an awkward mannerism: it was to move his fingers with convulsive swiftness in moments of impatience while above short legs and a rounded abdomen an eye unquiet as that of a tethered hawk looked out from the depths of a purpled cheek. He had lost the power to run. In short he was suffering from the common trouble, big dinners and late hours.¹

¹ Lord Morley, *Reminiscences*, II, p. 297.

He was none the less the head of a household of real distinction who seemed in an unconcerned way to be the masters of everything that mattered, who were rapidly making themselves secure in an interesting section of the best society, and among whom was a brilliant daughter who shared and stimulated her father's interest in his brightest recruit from the aristocracy. Haldane, a cousin of the Scottish officer whom Winston had made his friend, represented the strong shrewdness of a well-bred Scotsman trained to the law, on a foundation of solid work on German culture and its Hegelian philosophy. Lord Crewe, in a quieter and more urbane style, happily combined the varied lines of Lord Rosebery. Lord Morley, a generous and brilliant talker, most courteous to his adversary, joined Victorian radicalism to a style of pleasing distinction, and owed his fame not merely to his knowledge of Voltaire and Diderot, but more particularly to an essay on compromise. But the lights of all these men paled like stars at the advent of a meteor when one compared their talents to the genius with its convulsive energy, its high gift of eloquence, its zeal for crashing to pieces the sculpture that had ornamented and modelled the past, and with all these the power to manoeuvre, to persuade and to charm which all worked together to make up the wizardry of David Lloyd George. He had the gift against which industry, learning, scholarship, eloquence, social influence, wealth, reputation, an ordered mind, went for less than nothing. 'He had the seeing eye. He had the deep original instinct which peers through the surface of words and things, the vision which sees dimly but briefly the other side of the brick wall, or which follows the hunt two fields before the throng.'¹

It was to answer Lloyd George that Winston had first risen to speak in the House of Commons. They had become friends at once, and their gifts, against the different backgrounds of

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 280.

Welsh Dissenting provincialism on the one side, and that of Blenheim and British cavalry on the other, were of the same high order in brilliance, impetuosity, imagination and surprise. Both had the power to wheel and soar: both excelled in swiftness. Both lacked British phlegm, and disconcerted the prosaic mind with a foreign ingredient: one Celtic from Carnarvon; the other, of wilder blood, from New York.

And this element of danger dealt Churchill a blow in 1908, when on being made President of the Board of Trade, he lost his seat at Manchester. Lord Morley thought the reason for it was that he had adopted rather too naked tactics of dealing with groups for their votes without adapting their views to his conscience, and so had awoken the distrust of what Morley called honourably fastidious electors. Yet 'I have a great liking for Winston,' he added: 'for his vitality, his indefatigable industry and attention to business, his remarkable gift of language and skill in argument, and his curious flair for all sorts of political cases as they arise, though even he now and then mistakes a frothy bubble for a great wave. All the same, as I often tell him in a paternal way, a successful politician in this country needs a good deal more than skill in mere computation of other people's opinions without anxiety about his own.'¹

5

What really were his own opinions? His two main themes as he announced them were social justice and the people's rights. It was that moment in history when the equally fundamental proportion of people's duties—or indeed anyone's duties—had temporarily faded from discussion.

On the whole, of course, the masses did what duties they could. Their trouble came with their lack of duties: with their unemployment, their insecurity. To deal with these Britain

¹ Morley, *Reminiscences*, II, p. 255.

went for a model to Germany. And Churchill, with Lloyd George, adopted that system of State insurance in which imperial Germany led the way, and which Nazi Germany was to push to socialist and almost bolshevist extremes. He saw in the labour market three vicious conditions, and the first of these was the lack of any central organization or control of industry. Booms and slumps were inevitable, but there should be some means of reducing the oscillation by finding employment on the land, so as to save men willing to work from agony and ruin, and from the haunting dread of starvation.¹ Here Churchill—though he did not know it—was busy in 1908 with the precise question that had occupied Napoleon III in 1832, and was proposing the same answer.

The second difficulty was the gross and increasing evil of casual labour, the labourer who was flung back into misery as soon as business slackened, whose whole life, said Churchill, is a sort of blind, desperate, fatalistic gamble with circumstances beyond his comprehension or control. These pathetic and affrighting figures, said Churchill, were not the result of accident but were there so that when the chance came to make money in a boom they could be used. The third evil was the young men who did men's work for boys' wages, so that when they had to demand more, they were flung adrift on the poisoned stream to wait without hope a prospect to redeem them from inevitable decay. It was not that the rich were pitiless, but that the State needed a social organization to deal with the question: and they must have it. 'What is the use of living', asked Churchill, 'if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we have gone?' How else can we feel ourselves in harmonious relation with the great virtues and consolations of the infinite and eternal?'²

¹ W. Churchill, *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, pp. 199, 200.

² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

There must therefore be a scheme of insurance against unemployment, and there must be comfortable provision for the aged poor. On this indeed the Government had spent £8,000,000. 'All that money', he said, 'was circulating through unusual channels, long frozen by poverty, circulating in the homes of the poor, flowing through the little shops that cater to their needs, cementing again family unions which harsh fate was tearing asunder.' Well, he said, people whether Socialists or Tories, could have their sneer, and their jeer, and their beer, but here the Liberal Government had done something worthy of honour; this was a noble and inspiring event.

The influence of Lloyd George on Churchill's philosophy is plain; but the younger man traced his inspiration to another source: his love of his old nurse, Mrs. Everest.

And though on mines, on insurances, on budget, on the prevention of sweating, as on conciliation in South Africa, he was speaking the language of the Liberal Cabinet, yet he could remember how he said very similar things when he was still counted a Tory in 1903. Even then he had said in the House of Commons¹ that the greatness of countries depended neither on high armaments nor yet on material resources. What he asked for was sacrifice from all classes to obtain security for all classes. It was the gospel that in an impoverished Germany Hitler was to preach, but Winston Churchill was pouring it out in eloquent tones thirty years before him. There are, he said, 'dangers against which neither fleets nor armies can defend us: there are conditions which once secured will render countries secure, those are the vigour and health of the population as a whole.'² Social and industrial disorders, said Churchill, already, with their profound physical and moral reactions would, if unchecked, rob a great Empire of its prosperity and

¹ Hansard, 12 May 1903.

² *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, p. 295.

fame. Where, he asked, was its true glory but in the happiness of its cottage homes?¹

Through all his years as a Liberal Minister Churchill, therefore, was merely carrying out what he had said as a Tory in Parliament on the 4th of May 1903.

But now it was all worked out in the Liberal causes of the time. There was the future of the House of Lords and their veto; there was the forward movement in the social problem; there was a budget which vastly increased the contribution of the wealthy: all these things seemed so important at the time. They were all undermining the old aristocratic idea; they were all initiating a swift, if silent, revolution. They were the delayed but inevitable reaction to that England which Disraeli seventy years or so earlier had denounced as two nations. The Liberals were swimming with the tide, and their boast was that they were swimming at a regular, not a feverish pace. Put on too much pace and the power of resistance becomes overwhelming, whether it is a question of a car or a climb. So Churchill argued against Socialism. Hasten therefore slowly. Be a Liberal.²

Capital was to be controlled towards service of the people, patriotism was to be controlled towards the welfare of the world; but both objects were to be attained with mildness and tact. Such was the Churchill programme at the Board of Trade and the Home Office.

6

However gentle Mr. Churchill might feel in the matter of reform, he kept his relish of adventure; to cater for this some Russian gentlemen now came forward. Headed by 'Peter the Painter', they planned to rob a jeweller, and in the course of their preparations aroused suspicion in a neighbour. When

¹ *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, p. 295.

² *Coming Men*, p. 15. *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, pp. 67-85.

policemen called on them to inquire, they were received with a succession of shots which left them dead or dying, and then the criminals made off in the night. During that night, one of them, shot by a bullet which had already passed through the body of a policeman, was himself found dying. As evidence of an artistic temperament, but a culture new to England, he bequeathed to her a pistol, a dagger and a violin. So did London first make personal acquaintance with the tastes and ideals of the enlightened band which in the course of the next ten years were to come forward as the reformers and liberators of Russia.

For a fortnight covering the Christmas of 1910 the detectives pursued their investigations. When they were concluded and the police had found the anarchists in Houndsditch, these gentlemen again set to work with their guns. The police therefore asked troops to support them, and the message reached Mr. Churchill when, at ten in the morning, he was in his bath. Hurrying to the telephone in a towel, he made the required dispositions, and swiftly followed to the scene of action.

'Oo let 'em in?' was the question that greeted his arrival. It implied a criticism of Liberal policy in the matter of immigration. It was answered by some shooting, and on pressing on he soon found that a battle between the powers of conservation and those of reform had been actually joined. Such a thing had not been seen in England for a very long time indeed.

It might have been hard to justify the presence of the Home Secretary in this martial moment had not the affray kindled a fire. The firemen argued that it was their duty to put out a fire: the police told them that if they went further they would be shot down. 'That', said the fire brigade officer hotly, 'is no business of mine. I must stop the fire.' Here the Home Secretary intervened to support his police and cool the zeal of the firemen; the battle continued till three in the afternoon, when the fire must have suffocated the inmates. The house was

rushed and two charred bodies were found inside. But that of 'Peter the Painter' was not among them: it was surmised he had gone back to the Bolsheviks whence he came. 'Certainly', wrote Mr. Churchill in after years, 'his qualities and record would well have fitted him to take an honoured place in that noble band. But of this alone, rumour is the foundation.'¹

7

Two years before this deed of blood, Mr. Churchill had taken steps to satisfy another side of his nature. It was then nearly ten years since Mrs. Everest had died, it was eight since Lady Randolph had become Mrs. West. There had been a void in Mr. Churchill's life, but now he found an opportunity to fill it. He fell in love with Miss Clementine, the daughter of Sir Henry and Lady Blanche Hozier, she a sister to Lord Airlie. Miss Hozier was a tall, beautiful and charming creature, with eyes that gleamed like a river on a night of stars, a daughter both of Scotland and the gods, a woman suited to move with a brilliant man of affairs and fill his life. This she did to perfection. 'Love, sweetness, goodness in her person smiled.' They were married in the summer of 1908, and, in her husband's words, lived happily ever afterwards. 'Love', wrote Mr. Churchill later in the style that suggests Shelley, 'is a sublime passion which expresses and dominates all being,' and he went on to dilate on 'the glory of that wedlock in which the vast majority of mankind find happiness and salvation in a precarious world.'² Their son, also named Randolph, was born in 1911. Of four daughters one died as a baby. Of the three remaining, one is married to an M.P., Mr. Duncan Sandys, and another to Mr. Vic Oliver.

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 71, 72.

² *Marlborough*, I, pp. 142, 143.

CHAPTER 5

The First Lord

So far Mr. Churchill's career had been occupied firstly with the wars on the outskirts of the Empire, with imperial preference, or with home affairs, especially on their commercial side. Free trade and social amelioration had led on to great declarations about the people's budget, the people's trade, the people's land, the people's welfare, the people's choice—in a word, the people's rights. But the Cabinet is a privileged and exclusive form of general education. It is collectively responsible for the whole government of the country, the supreme issues on every subject are debated there, and on every point the final word is with the Prime Minister.

Among the questions which now occasioned most anxiety were those relating to foreign affairs, and especially to the ambitions of Germany. For many years the States of Europe had become more and more occupied with that very question that disturbs them still: how to live with Germany. The chief preoccupation was then with the German Navy.

It is the peculiarity of specialists to watch their specialities with care and to be jealous of rivalry. At the university the question of an academic inaccuracy is capital. In diplomacy, a game not unlike chess is played, where every move and the value of each particular piece must be estimated so that wherever necessary it may be countered. If a nation builds an extra ship, or adopts a new design, the other country must take

immediate cognizance and adjust things accordingly. It was into this state of specialized rivalry with one another that Britain and Germany now entered or were drawn in as members on the one side of the Triple Entente, and on the other of the Triple Alliance. For the main tug, the main danger was on the Danube.

That King of Rivers, as Napoleon had called it, had been the crux of the history of Europe from 1877, when Russia had fought Turkey; it was with this question that Europe had been occupied at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a Congress in which no real solution had been found, for the reason that the Great Powers had merely manœuvred against one another, and taken no steps for the well-being of the Balkan countries themselves. While the moves and intrigues of Russia (mainly against Austria) were thus on one side a chief concern of Europe; on the other, the almost equally urgent problem arose from the spreading of German trade, and the increase of the German Navy. It looked very much as though Germany intended to dispute the wealth and empire of Britain. Her traders were succeeding year after year, in area after area, by what they called peaceful penetration. That in itself was extremely provoking to business men: it could even be interpreted as dragging bread out of English mouths. But that was not the end of the annoyance: the naval programme suggested that peaceful penetration was being backed by armed diplomacy: it might even proceed to acts of war. The spirit of Germany was aggressively martial.

This subject was sufficiently thorny to the Tories: but even a Liberal Government could not ignore the information which kept pouring in from the experts of the Admiralty and the Foreign Office. Such reports were as exciting as such a gentleman as Peter the Painter to Winston Churchill; when they led to Cabinet discussions they interested him much more than prison reform, though, to be sure, to that subject his stay in

Pretoria had given a fillip apart from a Liberal's interest in improving the gaols.

The trend of his mind began to turn more and more to foreign affairs; although in 1909 he had argued to cut down the Naval Estimates, he soon extricated himself from that mistake; his quick brain saw, now in 1910, that the big question for England was not the army: for as long as Britain had a navy neither her possessions nor her trade would be in danger. Her history turned on the supremacy of her navy, and on that subject his mind began to be absorbed so wholly that, when a crisis arose, it seemed to Asquith a natural and indeed inevitable move to make Churchill First Lord of the Admiralty. That crisis arose in the August of 1911 over an incident at a little port in Morocco called Agadir.

Now the spheres of the different powers had been defined by the Council of Algeciras; and when, after trouble in this sphere of French influence, the French, to strengthen their authority, proceeded to occupy Fez, the Germans claimed that the French were pushing too far. To assert themselves they sent a gunboat to Agadir, the southernmost port of Morocco, implying that they might land troops and form a sphere of influence of their own. This in turn was represented as an act of aggression, and it was felt that the time had come to give Germany a warning. It was finally Lloyd George who, of his own initiative, gave it at the Guildhall on the 21st of July 1911.

'I conceive', he said, 'that nothing would justify a disturbance of international goodwill except questions of the gravest national moment. But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement—by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests are vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the cabinet of nations—then I say emphatically that

peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.’¹

2

It was indeed this great question of prestige and humiliation which now became all important. That Germany was deliberately trying to force a war on England has never been the view of the Foreign Office: still less did they feel that Germany was preparing an invasion: but what the Germans had in view was to have a combination of fleet and army so strong that if, on a crucial question, she could unite with another powerful navy to press a point, Britain would not dare to risk war and the Germans would secure their strength.²

With this end in view, the Germans built their fleet, with such furious energy that by 1912 they had in the North Sea a fleet stronger than the whole navy of the British Empire had been twenty years before. But the North Sea was not the only field of rivalry. Austria was also strengthening her navy, and Italy was in the Triple Alliance with Austria. Although Italy had inserted a clause in the alliance that she must not fight Britain, the clause was kept secret so that Germany could use her threat of Italy in diplomatic pressure. Meanwhile the Emperor William strove to persuade his cousin the Tsar Nicholas to act with him against England, and as far back as the 24th of July 1905 the two had signed a secret treaty of alliance at Bjorko. All these things, none the less menacing for not being divulged, were in the air, and appealed furiously to the instinct and imagination of Mr. Churchill. There were two ways of dealing with Germany: one might have been to de-

¹ *Battle*, p. 90.

² J. W. Headlam-Morley, historian of the Foreign Office, in article ‘Europe’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1st edition), XXXI, p. 19.

clare a preventive war, but this was never seriously considered: the other was to work for a stronger fleet to combine with other strong fleets to act in good time and secure their objects by a show of strength. To this plan, the two Edwards—one the King, the other, Grey, his Foreign Secretary—bent all their energies from the moment the Liberals had come into power. The King had already pressed this policy forward from the beginning of his reign.

Such was the drama into which the affair of Agadir brought tense excitement and fierce discussion in a summer climatically torrid. Churchill threw himself with characteristic energy into every phase of the discussion. The administration of England neither worried him nor fascinated him enough to hold his attention from the all-absorbing topic of Germany and how to cope with her. On August the 13th he presented to the Committee of Imperial Defence a time-table of how Germany would invade Belgium and France till she would be held on the fortieth day. It was an arresting prophecy forcibly delivered. His vehemence and prophetic fire almost overwhelmed the Foreign Secretary; but late in those hot afternoons he would lead his interlocutor across Saint James's Park to Pall Mall, to revive this Minister's drooping energies—while he cooled his own ardour—in the underground swimming-bath of the Royal Automobile Club. Whether Mr. Amery appeared, and if so with what result, we are not told. Such was the summer of 1911.¹

In the autumn Churchill went to Scotland, not for shooting, as he had so often done in earlier years at Rosebery or Dalmeny. The important fact now was that the Lowlands air was sustaining the successor of 'the Moloch of Midlothian'. Mr. Asquith had taken a house at Archerfield. Lord Haldane was not far away at Cloan in Perthshire.

The development of the political situation and the hastening

¹ Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, I, p. 238.

menace of war forced Asquith to consider acutely the violent debating taking place on the question of Army and Navy. Although his two chief advisers were still Grey and Haldane, the impetuosity of Winston was difficult to resist, and Winston, having seen that the Navy was the all-important thing, decided to urge that the administration of it should now be given to himself. Asquith hesitated; Haldane demurred. Winston's peculiar gifts, he said, were obvious enough, but if this was a question of preparing scientifically a special instrument, and keeping the people of England in agreement with this scientific preparation, could Winston do it? Haldane thought that he himself could do it better. He had just accomplished it at the War Office: why should he not go then to the other side of Whitehall and busy himself with reorganization at the Admiralty, and so make himself in a double sense the saviour of Britain? Meanwhile there was another colleague already at the Admiralty. Mr. Reginald McKenna had been doing very well there and did not wish to move.

That Churchill was so absorbed in the question of a naval tussle with Germany that he burned with eager ambition to direct it, neither he nor any other would deny. But there is some conflict of evidence as to how he came into the post. Mr. Churchill tells us that after he had been having a round of golf with the Prime Minister the day succeeding his arrival at Archerfield, Asquith asked him abruptly if he would like to go to the Admiralty. He answered quickly: 'Indeed I would.'¹ A curious sense of drama possessed the younger man's mind as they looked down at the Firth of Forth below and saw two battleships steaming out to sea, and when he went up to dress for dinner, he noticed in his bedroom a large Bible. He opened it and read: '*Thou art to pass over Jordan this day to go in to*

¹ Even if this was the first mention of the appointment between the two men, it is still possible that both had already discussed it with the Prime Minister's daughter, Lady Violet.

possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven. Understand therefore this day that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them and burn them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out and destroy them quickly.'

Surely these words were a vocation. When Lord Haldane drove over to Archerfield the next morning, he found an elated Winston standing portentous in the doorway. Another battle had been joined, and Lord Haldane recounts episodes of which Mr. Churchill has hinted nothing. Lord Haldane says that Mr. Churchill had heard of possible changes and come down at once to see the Prime Minister, and importune him for the Admiralty, insisting that it must be himself rather than Haldane, because Haldane was by this time in the House of Lords. Haldane now argued that if a real naval staff were to be created, and the point to be argued with the Admiralty, the head must be a man with not only knowledge but experience to deal with a technical and highly-complicated organization.

Asquith was determined that the two men, Haldane and Churchill, should thresh the thing out together and alone, and invited Haldane to return next morning.

'You have more imaginative power and vitality than I, certainly,' said Haldane when they were shut up together. 'Physically you are better suited to be a War Minister. But at this critical moment, it is not merely a question of such qualities as those. The Navy first, and the public have to be convinced. They will be most easily convinced of the scientific preparation for naval war by someone who has already carried out these preparations in the only service where so far they have been thought of. I am satisfied that in all probability I can accomplish what is wanted within twelve months: if you will look after the Army till the end of that time, I will then return to it, and you can then take over the Admiralty. To be frank, I don't

think your own type of mind is the best, to find the necessary solution for the problem now confronting us!'¹

Churchill thought otherwise and said so. Asquith had evidently decided not to withstand him. But finally Haldane and Churchill had struck an agreement, that there must be a War Staff for the Navy, and that Haldane should come over to the Admiralty and advise about it. It was an arrangement that worked out excellently, though it undermined Churchill's original principle that Britain should not be involved with Continental armies

3

Convinced that the sons of Anak were about to rise against him, the new Minister of Marine set out on seven high designs: (1) to make a new war plan for the fleet; (2) to have the fleet ready for any crisis at any moment; (3) to guard against any surprise or sudden attack; (4) to create, on the model of the Army, a General Staff for the Navy; (5) to work in with the Army in a plan of campaign in Europe; (6) to make the ships' gunnery stronger; and lastly, (7) to have both at the Admiralty and on blue water those Commanders who would plan and command with consummate enterprise and forethought: for efficiency was not really in question. The winning of a war depends, as men were to see in 1940, not on courage, but on planned and co-ordinated surprise with new and more powerful methods and weapons. It was to secure these weapons, to co-ordinate them, to rush them, if necessary, into decisive shock action, and by all means possible to forestall a foe by hurrying strength, which occupied Winston Churchill for two years after he came to the Admiralty. But the Navy at that moment was not really in need of shock action. It had already received it from one of its own admirals,

¹ Haldane, *Autobiography*, pp. 231, 232.

the redoubtable John Fisher, then in retirement in the House of Lords.

This remarkable man, who combined the physiognomy of Japan with the style of the bulldog and a heart of gold, had for seven years pressed, and not without success, sweeping reforms upon the British Navy. His methods were Churchill's own, but far more pugnacious. Discipline he must have learnt in younger days, but in command he was the spirit of uproar. To those who resisted the rush of his reform, he was in his own words, 'ruthless, relentless, remorseless'; he called them cowardly traitors: but to those who supported him, he was as the sun shining forth in its might. 'Favouritism', he wrote at Dartmouth, 'is the secret of efficiency.' At every turn he wanted to stab people broad awake. He knew that the business on which he was engaged was to keep a shield over the naked heart of England; and the shield would be pierced if secrets were lost, or cohesion. Yet, that he might hurl reckless his darts and javelins, he gambled desperately with both. If attack were desperate enough, he seemed to think, what need of defence? From him the new Minister found knowledge and ideas shooting like lava in vehement eruption from a volcano. The difficulty was that he was no longer in command. In the changes and chances of his life, the command of the Home Fleet, on which now the weal of England depended, had passed to Lord Charles Beresford who was one of his fiercest enemies.

If Winston Churchill were to make use of Fisher and yet command the confidence of his admirals, he would need to deploy a genius of tact. But why not, if one loves to live dangerously? so he claimed all Fisher's help:

The riddle will not be solved unless you are willing, for the Glory of God, to expend yourself upon its toil. I recognize it is little enough I can offer you. But your Gifts, your Force,

your Hopes, belong to the Navy, with or without return, and as your most sincere admirer and as Head of the Admiralty, I claim them now for the Navy, knowing well you will not grudge them. You need a plow to draw, your propellers are racing in the air.

Yours in warm regard,

W. C.¹

And so he had at command for a time a brilliant fountain of counsel writing to him: 'My beloved Winston' and ending: Yours till charcoal sprouts, Yours to a cinder, Yours till the angels smile on us or, in the fiercer vein, Yours till hell freezes. 'Alas,' wrote Mr. Churchill afterwards, 'there was a day when friendship was reduced to cinders.' Charcoal sprouted, the angels had dashed all hopes; Hell froze. It was no longer 'My beloved Winston', but 'First Lord: I can no longer be your colleague.' Such was the dire result of trying to override the old man when he had been recalled as First Sea Lord to the Admiralty.

4

In most ministries, as for example in the Foreign Office, the Secretary of State sits alone, as the single head of a complex hierarchy. The decision of policy and action comes to him, and would be final but for the fact that in all departments the Prime Minister is ultimately responsible, though indeed he has to carry the Cabinet with him. But since in matters of altercation between departments the Prime Minister must decide and give the order, he becomes much more like a dictator than most people realize. If he is able and decisive, there is little to restrain his power. He is supreme.

Mr. Asquith's gifts, however, were less those of a governor than of a judge. He was not fitted to give a strong personal

¹ Bacon, *Fisher*, II, p. 153.

direction to imperial administration: he was content to keep his close watch on foreign affairs with Haldane and Grey, while leaving the men of vision, Lloyd George and Churchill, almost complete independence to develop their enterprise and their decision, while he, reserved and slow, waited till all had spoken before he spoke as arbiter.¹ It was not, therefore, in the Cabinet that the new Minister of Marine had the great battles to fight; for Asquith gave him the support of powerful silence. No, the peculiarity of his situation was that the Admiralty was governed by a board. At every point of naval administration it was necessary for the political head, who was responsible to Crown and Parliament, to confer with the expert authorities. The First Lord rules as chairman of a council. In this council Churchill at first had difficulties: he found in Sir Arthur Wilson, his First Sea Lord or senior admiral, certainly a man devoted to duty with utter selflessness, and extremely competent, but at the same time an unyielding Conservative. After a time, Churchill decided this fine old man must go and that a new board must be formed; that the Navy should think less of navigation and exercise and lend all its energies to the prospect of immediate war—war with Germany. He reconstituted the Board with Sir Francis Bridgeman, Prince Louis of Battenburg, Rear-Admiral Briggs and Captain Pakenham. The health of Bridgeman soon threw the first responsibility on Prince Louis, a man who had all the thoroughness which is German combined with a gift for lucid writing that is not German. He was, needless to say, thoroughly loyal to Britain, with that accurate sense of German defects which Germans have the best reason for developing. And, as he once said to a German admiral who claimed him for the German Empire: ‘Sir, when I joined the Royal Navy in the year 1868, the German Empire did not exist.’

It was with these highly competent advisers that the new

• ¹ Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*, p. 576.

First Lord set out to secure his seven great objectives. Preparations for war with Germany occupied him day and night. He was for ever talking and arguing with admirals and generals.¹ He foresaw two possibilities which asked for the harnessed adaptation of every energy: one was the possibility of a German surprise attack in which a vital part of the fleet would be destroyed by German numbers. in that case, the war would be lost, Britain would be laid low, her wealth forfeited, her pride abased, and her freedom curtailed. 'We have seen in recent years', wrote Churchill after 1919, 'how little completely victorious nations can be trusted to restrain their passions against a prostrate foe.'² The stakes, therefore, were high. But if this attack could be warded off, then how would the British Navy act? It could no longer press home an attack in Germany's own waters. Therefore the only policy must be one of blockade from a distance, and so cut off the German Navy from the world, so constrict her commerce that starvation at last would force the enemy ships out to defeat in the open sea. A cordon of destroyers and mine-fields blocked the Straits of Dover, while patrolling from Scapa Flow, the Grand Fleet would be masters of the Northern Sea.

Thus the Admiralty made their decisions and waited. Twice Churchill suggested a 'naval holiday'.³ There was some heavy technical work to be done on the question of oil fuel. And here again Lord Fisher came into the boat to pull with Churchill to the winning-post. Sensing the future as they did together, they saw that whether or not oil was used as the principal fuel of the Navy, it would be one of the decisive munitions of war, and naval strategy must be so arranged as to secure it. In 1912 Churchill had appointed a 'Royal Commission on Oil Fuel and Oil Engines for the Navy'. Of this he made Lord Fisher chairman. At this Commission Fisher saw that the

¹ French, *Some War Diaries*, I, p. 40.

² *World Crisis*, p. 96.

³ Asquith, *Genesis of the War*, p. 102.

fields exploited by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company would prove capital to Britain, and shares were bought for £2,000,000 which in less than twenty years were worth £60,000,000. It was Fisher who saw that these oil-fields would prove the richest in the world, Fisher who said accordingly, 'We must do our damndest to get control of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and keep it for all time.' Churchill swiftly understood. He thoroughly sympathized with the enterprise of Fisher, and gave this proposal the backing of his eloquence: but he did not mention that this question largely depended on the friendship of Italy who could cut the Mediterranean in two.

While the oil question was being discussed, and for months after, there was endless discussion about Ireland, and the British troops there debated hotly whether they should take orders from a Liberal Government to coerce the Ulstermen, with whom they sympathized. It looked to the outside world, and to more than one foreign envoy in London, as if, engrossed with these questions, England could not enter into war.

And meanwhile the social spectacle of Britain's wealth was dazzling. The names and portraits of Emperors and Kings centred the attention of the world on a life where men enjoyed the luxuries of their long peace. Even armies seemed, as adjuncts of a diplomacy discreet and courteous, to be more decorative than deadly. High ceremonies, elaborate dressing, and the glittering processions of society towards Courts and cities of power combined to make the sunset of an epoch into a gorgeous and enthralling scene of which none dreamt that they were seeing the last. —

But, says Mr. Churchill, 'there was a strange temper in the air. Unsatisfied by material prosperity the nations turned restlessly towards strife, internal or external. National passions, unduly exalted in the decline of religion, burned beneath the surface of nearly every land with fierce, if shrouded, fires.

Almost one might think that the world wished to suffer. Certainly men were everywhere eager to dare.¹

5

What was the infection that threatened to turn these flaunting, handsome European creatures into paupers, into invalids, into cripples, into fetid corpses and skeletons? What microbes and what plague? Mr. Churchill has explained it: a strange discordant restlessness, leading to an intensification of nationalism. And the secret of it was a decline of religion. Forgetting that life alone is properly balanced when it looks beyond itself into immortality, that immortality is a quality that men attain by equal temper of heroic mind, and by the exercise of gratitude, of patience and of hope, individuals were allowing their restless energies to betray and beguile them. And as individuals lacked the sense of spiritual order and authority, so did States. The progress of invention, the portentous growth of commerce were noisy with flattering promises of wealth and ease. But real wealth was rarer than ever; it was the prerogative of a few gained at the expense of many's misery. And so as the life of business was suffering from an undiscussed disorder, so the life of nations was set on dangerous fantasies. Rivalry became an end, oblivious of the order of unity in law. That unity was the body of a Universal Church living in charity by interaction of commerce and ideas.

But this system had been exchanged for contrivances of votes, companies, tariffs, armaments, where the dominant motive was to get rich quick. This joined to an unbridled lust for pleasure, or a still stronger lust for dominating others, had become the mainspring of policy in Europe, and was particularly sinister where Russia championed the Slavs of Eastern Europe. And Germany was self-conscious and ambitious.

¹ *World Crisis*, pp. 107, 108.

The strain of competing nationalisms therefore was being made impossible by the rise and thoroughness of Germany, while the competing national diplomacies, supporting tariffs and armaments, had failed to take account that their nations were living and growing by an ever-increasing internationalism of commerce—by what Queen Elizabeth, writing to the Emperor Akbar, had described as the ‘mutual and friendly traffic of merchandise’. It was with what she described as ‘a courteous and honest boldnesse’ that her subject, John Newbury, had repaired to the dominions of the great Mogul: but now courtesy and honesty were declining: boldness was straying from its legitimate field. Europe had become unstable. In its armaments it was daily strengthening an organization for its own undoing. It was leaving the lives and fortunes of the Britisher at the mercy of national tension between savage Serbs and Austrian administrators on the borders of Bosnia. Such a system was arbitrary and unreal, it was weighted with the elements of tragedy. Long before the redistribution of the Balkans, which occupied the diplomats continuously through the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, the more delicate instruments of history and politics registering the radiations of the wireless of destiny learnt the purport of both contemporary and ancestral voices. It was the prophecy of war.¹

But it was not of the state of Europe that the leaders of England debated in 1914. It was always the wretched Irish squabble, which was fought out with an acrimony that showed once more how far people were from just and sane judgement. It was still of Ireland that politicians were thinking when, three or four weeks after the Serajevo murder of the heir to the throne of Austria, the King of England held on July the 17th and 18th a grand review of the Navy. But along the Danube things were becoming more and more serious. The Austrians, who had with great good nature maintained order

* Cf. R. Sencourt, *Peace and Politics*, pp. 75, 76.

among Slavs and Hungarians much less calm, kind and efficient than themselves, were saying that in Belgrade, a place of sensational crime and roughness, no more murder plots must be hatched against the Imperial Power or Family of Vienna: but Russia, supporting Belgrade, pressed on and finally was to march out to actual battle in the name of prestige.

And must England come in on this question? An important German, Herr Ballin, arrived from Berlin to ask just that from the British Government. There might easily be a war of Vienna and Berlin against Paris and Petersburg. Would England stay out if Germany promised not to harm France? No-one could say. As Churchill parted from Ballin, he said, with tears in his eyes, 'My dear friend, don't let us go to war.'¹

That was on Friday, the 24th of July 1914. The next week things grew more tense. Every day the Ministers met in Downing Street, and Grey argued that the German Fleet must not be allowed down the Channel, because the French Fleet, by arrangement with Britain, was in the Mediterranean. The First Lord took the additional precaution of keeping in touch with the Opposition.² Two schemes preoccupied him. One was to have the fleet mobilized and on the alert for a surprise attack: the other was to shadow the German cruisers *Goeben* and *Breslau* in the Mediterranean. When at last the Cabinet decision came, all was ready: as soon as he heard on the evening of Saturday, August the 1st, that Germany had declared war on Russia, Churchill, quietly leaving a game of bridge he was playing, decided to defy the direction given that morning by the Cabinet: he mobilized the Fleet.³

Fisher's choice, Sir John Jellicoe, had been placed in command, and with a tense expectancy, yet conscious that all the

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 112.

² Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, p. 97.

³ *World Crisis*, 1911-14, pp. 216-17. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, I, pp. 35-7.

required dispositions had been taken, Winston Churchill waited for the prepared moment when the great drama should open in thunder and fire. All warnings had been given. At eleven on the night of August the 4th, as the big boom of the striking hour floated down on Whitehall above the notes of *God save the King*, the wireless flashed out to the Fleet the order for war.

6

As a boy Winston Churchill had moved his fifteen hundred soldiers to and fro in endless battles. It was prophetic play. Now at a crisis in history he was to move, with almost the same absoluteness and certainly the same zest, those units of war and power which were to the Empire and history as the storm-wind is to the torn but flying banner, while the ships, themselves storm-beaten, fought also against those new and deadly hazards of the sea, which it was his responsibility to guess and defy.

He first busied himself with the passage of the army to France, and all was completed without the loss of a man, and then the whole attention of the Government was taken up with the rush of the Germans into France, that rush Churchill had timed so exactly three years before, and which, sure enough, was held up more or less on the fortieth day in the battle of the Marne. The Navy well performed its work, and it was not until later months, when the question of Antwerp arose, that the First Lord had to change the plans he had made for the complete control of the seas by the British Navy. That succeeded steadily—the four great episodes of the Naval War were Antwerp, the fight with Admiral von Spee, the Dardanelles, and the Battle of Jutland. Otherwise the task of the Navy was patience. These are separate stories.

From that crisis one question stands out. What was Churchill's attitude towards the war? Anxious to avert it, as he, with all the others was, did he or could he do anything to avert it? The answer is plain. His duty towards those preparations was to have an efficient navy. That he had, and that absorbed the every faculty and interest of his genius. In the high diplomacy of Europe he took no real part. He no longer envisaged a constructive plan for Europe, nor did he make any criticism of the curious diplomacy of the time, diplomacy by which, in the words of a great judge, Lord Loreburn, 'We went to war unprepared in a Russian struggle because we were tied to France in the dark.'¹

Mr. Churchill was to see at the end of the war the weakness of the peace: he has left no record that he saw at its beginning the weaknesses of the diplomacy which put England at the mercy of a Russian intrigue; Churchill makes no criticism of his colleague, Grey; and yet a criticism can be levelled. For Grey, in the opinion of Lord Loreburn, was neither open nor constructive. It is true that he disliked the burden, and foresaw the danger of swelling armaments. 'We are shocked', he said, 'as business men with the sense of the waste of it, and we are filled, as business men, with apprehension of the effect it will have,'² but he could not produce a constructive plan for leadership in Europe.³ The reason was plain: the lack of central moral authority, and the preference of individual prestige and gain to a co-ordinated plan. British Imperialism engen-

¹ Loreburn, *How the War Came*, p. 17.

² Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*, p. 426.

³ Mr Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs* enlarges on his weakness.

dered German Imperialism. The trouble was that while Britain's Imperialism was replete, German Imperialism had hungry cravings. The British Empire was in fact just forty times as roomy as the German Empire. No-one looked ahead to the unity of Europe: the plans for the well-being of society which Mr. Churchill, with others, had cherished, were left in abeyance, while he bent his energies to a national cause of an army fighting in Europe along lines which at the outset of his career he had powerfully condemned.

As for those earlier ideas that Winston Churchill inherited from his father, they were for the moment forgotten, both by himself and everyone else—but they remained at the base of his high adventures. To understand the workings of his mind, however, one should at this point recall them.

A European war can only end in the ruin of the vanquished and scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors. Democracy is more vindictive than Cabinets. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of Kings.

For to this truth his mind was often to revert.

His was a mind which looked two ways: one side of it was conciliatory, and planned advancement in accordance with his spiritual view of the welfare of men: the other was combative, immediate and with these so personally ambitious that when in high spirits he could seem truculent and overbearing.¹ He was a personal index to the problem and temper of his time. The conflict in him between the particular and the universal, between the immediate and the durable, between the fighter and the reformer, is the drama of his career, and the secret of his place in the history of a period divided by a kindred struggle between comparable qualities to his own. All over Europe the sanities of idealism fought the greed and lust of rivalry.

Winston Churchill was on his way to the victory of demo-

¹ Sir E. Marsh, *A Number of People*, p. 149.

cracy through the wars of peoples in the lust of hate and pride. But if he said, 'in war resolution, in defeat defiance,' yet he at least cherished other ideals: 'in victory magnanimity, in peace goodwill,' and to them, as soon as he felt Britain was safe, he returned.

CHAPTER 6

Lord Fisher and the Navy

It was now fourteen years since Winston Churchill had given up the life of action in the great spaces for the machinery of politics in the murk and press of London; for eight of those years, he had held office; and he had given himself, if not with all his heart, yet with full dramatic energy to the fighting business of party politics, now on the question of a budget which began to extinguish the power and privilege of the landlord, now on the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords, now on resisting suffragettes, at first in demanding lower estimates for the navy, later in demanding a big increase for this same purpose. In all alike he had shown less constructive philosophy than swift, dramatic and brilliant improvisation, especially in everything that meant a fight. His genius was tinder. It flamed up from flying sparks from the genius and imagination of a colleague like Lloyd George, an opponent like F. E. Smith, or a crisis in the affairs of party or nation. But though he did not disdain the rancour and acerbity of politics, he kept a secret sense that these things had a taint of sordidness, and were a profanation of the high heroic gifts. He sought friendship with the other side and on the great questions worked steadily towards conciliation.¹ What were these conventional quarrels but an agitated froth on the great current of national life?²

¹ Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from the Inside*, pp. 572-80.

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 231.

It was with a sense of freedom and adventure that with the help of his friend, Fisher, he had addressed himself to the task of preparing the navy for war, of fighting in Cabinet and Parliament for its budget, of supporting Fisher in the choice of men and weapons, and in considering the high strategic plans to ensure for Britain the safety of the seas. All this had been consummated in the daring act by which, without either a Cabinet decision or the King's order, he mobilized the fleet three days before the war began, while with a hunter's zest his ships chased two German cruisers, the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, from Sicily to Constantinople.

In all that time he had had the support of Fisher, and had himself lent his full energy to his Admiral's own demands. But now a defect appeared. The drive and command which he had assumed were overpowering him with the conviction that he himself was the absolute master of naval war, and from this his eager and teeming brain shot outwards to direct the battle in its ranges over Europe and the world. The German plans, if laboriously constructed out of thoroughness, had themselves a vast sweep towards supreme dominion over the deeps of blue water and blue air. The German schemes working through alliances ranged from the North Sea over the solid order of the German-speaking world to the Adriatic and the Danube, and over the Bosphorus to Anatolia, Erzerum, and Baghdad. They led from the cold mouth of the Elbe with its pines and snow to the palm-girt and sultry mouth of those joined rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates at Bassorah in the Persian Gulf. Their interests stretched on to tracts of Africa south of the Equator, to Tsingtau in China, to New Guinea and the far island of Samoa in the Southern Seas. In all these they organized their forces to fight in tropic highland, or sail sunny seas, while at the same time the weight of their force burst upon Belgium and pressed towards Paris. For every one of these theatres of war Churchill conceived a plan to suit that vehement, high and

daring temper which sought at one time to overrule the sagacious specialities of sea-dogs, or the cautious cynicism of Asquith and his Cabinet.

Had Churchill been dictator, able to bend every resource of national effort to the strategy he had conceived, he might have been for this war a second Marlborough: but he was not in that position. In the Cabinet he could be overruled; at the Admiralty they first doubted, then disputed, the advisability of allowing a political minister to assume power over the dispositions of the First Sea Lord, who had good grounds for claiming that in war he alone could speak for what was sound as naval strategy. So while the war told its story of clashing imperialisms (for each conjuncture of powers tried to smash the bodies and end the lives of men) Winston Churchill, in his profound passion for war as the grand game and exercise of nations, found himself engaged in a harder wrestle with leaders in his own country. His enemies found every opportunity to attack him by opening their information to the *Morning Post*, a paper which in those days no-one could ignore. At first Asquith encouraged him: then, as he grew doubtful, his enthusiasm degenerated into amusement, and from amusement he went to boredom: and how soon boredom becomes annoyance at a man whose activity was always goading him into decisions or exposing his administration to party attack, when his instinct for compromise was to wait and see!¹

2

It was certainly not the fault of Churchill when the *Goeben* and *Breslau* escaped their hunters south of Taranto, and managed to reach the Dardanelles, where they were taken under the protection of a pro-German Turkey. He burned to anticipate legality and attack them while they were yet within

¹ Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, II, pp. 32, 33.

reach before the ultimatum had expired. The Admiralty had watched the chase with sharpest keenness and undivided mind; the result was that if the enemy ships were not destroyed, at least they were hunted from the Mediterranean. Nor was the Royal Navy luckier when on August the 22nd the *Karlsruhe* escaped from the *Bristol* at Bermuda; but the first shock came when on August the 22nd, three goodly—if outmoded—cruisers, the *Aboukir*, the *Hogue*, and the *Cressy*, were sunk by submarine in the Lowland Sea with the loss of 1,400 men, skilled, brave and true. It was asked what those ships were doing in those waters: it was claimed they had been taken from the command of Jellicoe; again there were loud complaints that the First Lord abrogated to the Admiralty that disposition of ships which should have been left to the Sea Lords. This attack was pressed home by one of Winston's oldest parliamentary friends, Thomas Gibson Bowles. The First Lord himself instituted a Court of Inquiry. It was found that the Commanders had taken few precautions: in order chivalrously to help the men of the *Aboukir* when she was struck, the *Hogue* and *Cressy* had actually come to a standstill when they knew that a submarine was near, only of course to offer themselves a target for fresh torpedoes. Neither their generous foolhardiness nor their actual position in the sea could really have been attributed to the First Lord; but the obstinate fact remained that for all the business of the Admiralty, he, and not another, was responsible to Crown and Parliament.

He again fell under criticism a week or two later when his Marines landed in Belgium. The Battle of the Marne had been won; Paris was saved; and the German Army wheeled westward to seize the Channel ports. Churchill's first contribution was to send some detachments of Marines to Ostend, and these did good work in safeguarding the background of the port. But the whole question of the German push towards

Dunkerque and Calais depended on the resistance offered by Antwerp to their advance. Churchill had been ordered to go personally to Dunkerque to stiffen the resistance and was actually in the train when a messenger arrived from Kitchener ordering him to return on account of the pressure on Antwerp, which was Belgium's only fortress then surviving to guard the whole line of the Channel ports; for this citadel the clashing armies now engaged with all their resources, and Kitchener with the French Staff decided quickly to send what reinforcements they could.

The enemy opened their bombardment on Antwerp on September the 28th. They rapidly destroyed the forts. The British Minister, Sir Francis Villiers, who was himself in the beleaguered city, wired on October the 2nd that the King of the Belgians with his Government had left for Ostend, and that Antwerp could hold out hardly a day or two longer. The British Cabinet, meeting late at night in Carlton House Gardens, at Lord Kitchener's house, were in dismay, when Churchill, recalled from Dover, joined their disturbed company: once more their quandary was solved by his enterprise. Overpowering the hesitant Grey, appealing to the soldier mind of Kitchener, he insisted that he should go there himself; he would organize resistance; he would stiffen the weakening courage of the Belgian Government. Welcoming the thought of Churchill's presence in the beleaguered city, Kitchener urged the plan, and gave the orders.

Before he had finished speaking, the clock had struck one. In half an hour Churchill was again at Victoria, and after an uneasy journey succeeded in reaching Antwerp after lunch on the following afternoon in a big drab-coloured car, into which he had squeezed some of his naval officers. The car was driven madly into Antwerp, its horn screeching, and drew up sharply before the leading hotel in the Place de Mer. It had hardly stopped when one of its doors was flung fiercely open, and out

jumped a man who, though he wore something not unlike a naval uniform (it was the less formal garb of Trinity House) was obviously not an admiral. Whitehall knew that impetuous figure so curiously distinguished by its combination of the impetuous haste of youth and the stoop of learned age, of softness of nose and cheek with firmness of lip, of sandy hair and baldness with decision and distinction. He flung himself into the crowded lobby of the best hotel with his arms stretched forward as though to greet friends or push away a crowd.¹ Winston Churchill had arrived.

In a few minutes he was receiving the Belgian Prime Minister and the Commander of Antwerp. They told him how grave the situation was: the ammunition was running short, the water had been cut off. Heavy artillery was battering down one fort after another. The fortress and the army were in deadly danger; and if the city fell rapidly, that fall meant ruin both to Belgium and the British Army. Each day Churchill saw the German attack pressed harder home. Immense cannon demolished fort after fort; machine-guns raked the trenches; an attack by infantry followed, and before them came in a long procession the stragglers and the wounded through the mellow autumn day over the cobbled streets of a city where showy shops, sumptuous galleries and stretching spires told of amassed wealth in which people were, even in those dangerous days, living in a luxury that contrasted with the grim efforts and endurance of the defending force. Churchill assumed command. Belgians and Britishers alike responded to the force of his will, his courage and his stubbornness. For several days the battered defence held good. The King and Queen remained, grave but undaunted, to share the Englishman's resolution. Then British reinforcements, two divisions, one of infantry, one of cavalry, commanded by General Rawlinson, appeared to turn the scale and baffle the Germans, who

¹ E. A. Powell, *Fighting in Flanders*, pp. 176, 177. f

questioned if these were but the advance guard of an army corps. On the evening of October the 5th all the positions lost had been regained, and Churchill felt that he must see the matter through. He then proposed to resign from the Admiralty so as to take permanent command of the British detachments then engaged. Kitchener offered to make him a lieutenant-general¹: but Asquith, whose shrewdness often sought refuge in Doubting Castle, said no; he would neither spare him from the Admiralty nor promote him over senior commanders, and Churchill's responsibilities at Antwerp, if considerable, remained vague.

By this time the Germans decided to employ a crushing force. Fresh streams of casualties and refugees proved even to the defiant Churchill that the odds had become overwhelming. Day after day, the enemy pressed home the new attack. By October the 8th the Belgian Division and the Naval Brigade were retreating from the city. Two days later it fell. The price paid for the resistance of Antwerp was heavy: 20,000 Belgian casualties, 1,500 Britishers of the Naval Division interned in Holland, 1,000 missing. But Churchill claimed that the five days' delay had enabled reinforcements to reach Sir John French, and that he had so saved the Channel ports. Asquith, with Hankey, agreed 'that this last week, which has delayed the fall of Antwerp by at least seven days, and has prevented the Germans from linking up their forces, has not been thrown away'.²

The attacks of Churchill's enemies continued, however; he was blamed for the expedition as though it had been a project entirely his own; it was pretended that he had extracted from Kitchener a permission which was reluctant, as a surgeon may bully a patient into accepting an unnecessary and painful operation that, instead of curing, kills. Again Mr. Bowles

¹ *World Crisis*, 1911-14, p. 351. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, I, 54.

² Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, II, pp. 44, 45.

harangued the clubs, and the *Morning Post* returned to its attack, which Churchill, with his taste for the strong imagery of the Bible, would gladly have compared to the pig that was cleansed returning to its wallowing in the mire; the fact remained that the Antwerp expedition had been initiated not by him but by Kitchener.

‘What a good thing,’ said Winston afterwards, referring to French, ‘to have an optimist at the front.’

‘Excellent,’ answered Asquith, ‘provided you have also, as we have in K., a pessimist in the rear.’¹

3

The month had not ended when yet another cruiser, the *Hermes*, was sunk by a submarine in the Channel, as a fortnight earlier the *Hawke* had been also. Next day, November the 1st, still worse news followed. Admiral von Spee, sailing eastward across the Pacific from Tsingtau past Samoa and Tahiti, had attacked and defeated off Coronel in Chile a squadron commanded by Sir Christopher Cradock. This squadron consisted of three cruisers, the *Good Hope*, the *Monmouth* and the *Glasgow*, accompanied by a converted merchantman, the *Otranto*.² Mr. Churchill might well claim that his plan had been to see that these ships remained close to the long guns of the battleship *Canopus*, which, sailing with them in those waters, would act as a fortress in the shelter of which they could safely engage the enemy: but Cradock was impatient to chase the Germans, and left the *Canopus* behind. When he sighted the German ships, he saw that they were in superior force; but with an audacity which overrode his scientific judgement, he joined battle, while the *Canopus*, his only real safeguard, was still three hundred miles away.

¹ Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, II, p. 50.

² For an account of this see *World Crisis*, pp. 235-45.

The result was swift: it was late afternoon, and on the Chilean coast the seas were heavy: the British guns were not unaffected by the spray: the German ships could fire heavier shells at a longer range; not only so, but the Germans, being closer to the coast, had the British ships against the sunset. At first the sinking sun obscured them from the German gunners, but once the sun had set they forfeited the defence so given; on the contrary, they now stood out sharply against the afterglow. Spee seized his advantage, and with deadly accuracy fired salvo after salvo. Both the *Good Hope* and the *Monmouth* flamed with fire and smoke against the darkening sky. At last a great explosion burst the *Good Hope* asunder, and her flames were quenched in the sombre onrush of the waves. The *Monmouth* was also totally disabled, but refusing surrender, went down with her flag flying; on these ships all men perished, from the admiral to the midshipmen, from chief engineers to seamen. Only the little *Glasgow*, steaming swiftly into the night, eluded the German guns: and Admiral von Spee, with not a man lost, not a ship injured, was supreme in the eastern Pacific.

4

Although the qualms and instructions of the First Lord had again been disregarded by a foolhardy commander, he was still responsible to Crown and Parliament for the business of the Admiralty. Criticism increased. It was at this point he made Lord Fisher his First Sea Lord in succession to Prince Louis of Battenberg. That able and patriotic admiral had not been exempt from the criticism which involved Churchill, and Asquith decided that, no matter how impeccable his record, how distinguished his services, it would be better he should go. Nor did Prince Louis himself fail to understand; to dismiss him, however, was no pleasant task for a Minister so warmly attached and so deeply indebted to him. With Lord Fisher,

Churchill now associated as Second Sea Lord Sir Arthur Wilson; and with the support of these septuagenarian sea-dogs, as Asquith called them, the harassed young Minister now addressed himself to the dispositions of the Fleet on either coast of South America, and now faced a Cabinet which, under the influence of Tory feeling and the *Morning Post*, was growing dubious, if not hostile.

Admiral von Spee had spent a few days in Valparaiso provisioning his ships and receiving in modest restraint the acclamations of its important German colony. It was, he knew, too early an hour for triumph: his whereabouts had become known to one of the most dangerous elements in the world, Britain's Royal Navy. What different plans he considered and rejected we do not know. What is plain is that he decided he had done his work in the Pacific, should pass through the cold Straits of Magellan south of the Land of Fire,¹ and attack the nearest British colony, the Falkland Islands, where he could seize coal and proceed onward over the Atlantic. He arrived there on December the 8th. In those far southern waters it was the height of summer. The sky was cloudless, the horizon far, the light failed only for a few hours around midnight. And in these conditions which made observation easy and escape impossible, the German Admiral engaged battle with five British cruisers, defended by the old *Canopus*. As he rounded the promontory of the capital's little harbour, however, he had a sharp surprise. Two of the latest type of battle cruisers were hidden by the hills which guarded the harbour. Such ships could not only move several knots faster than his German cruisers; but the weight of their guns and the length of their range were as obviously superior to those of the German ships as those in turn had been superior to those of the *Good Hope*, the *Monmouth* and the *Otranto*. The cautions of Spee at Valparaiso were now justified. At five

¹ Tierra del Fuego.

weeks' remove from Coronel he saw that he had been caught in a trap and had led his men to certain death.

He made, nevertheless, a desperate attempt at escape. The German squadron headed westward for the Straits through which they had recently passed. The British squadron at full steam pursued. One German ship, the *Leipzig*, began to lag behind: at this point Spee showed his mettle. He turned to do his worst against killing odds: nor, since escape was impossible, could anyone say this was foolhardiness: it was, on the other hand, a gesture of courage worthy of a sailor's tradition and instinct; the British example at Coronel had shown how sailors could gaze unflinching at honourable death. Spee's decision invited the British gunners to exert their highest skill, for the British, remaining out of range, could find their target only at the cost of many shells. Salvo after salvo broke through the dim mists of the summer afternoon to deal out destruction and death. The British ships quivered and shook beneath the reaction from the firing, but gradually the shells fell in with their destruction on the enemy's turrets, funnels, decks or stanchions, till they tore out the very vitals of the German cruisers, and more Germans were fighting fires than fighting guns. The flagship was herself the first to founder. At a quarter past four she with all her crew went down: it was nearly two hours later that her companion the *Gneisenau* opened her sea-cocks and, with her flag still flying, her soldiers parading on the deck to sing the songs of Germany, she too sank in the mighty waters as lead. Two more remaining cruisers were pursued with equal success, and perished with equal bravery, while one, the *Dresden*, passed back through the Straits into the Pacific, and sailing up the Chilean coast saw again at Coronel the scene of her precedent victory before she was captured some weeks later at the neighbouring island of Mas-a-Fuera.

The victory thrilled Britain: it was an epic fight, a resound-

ing victory, and it freed the seas for British commerce while leaving a formidable surplus of ships to sail back across the Equator to Scapa and the chilly but effective task of patrolling the North Sea.¹

This magnificent piece of work was due to Fisher. Churchill wrote to him: 'My dear. This was your show and your luck. I should only have sent one *Greyhound* and *Defence*. This would have done the trick. But it was a great coup. Your *flair* was quite true. Let us have some more victories together and confound all our foes abroad and (don't forget) at home. . . . Yours, W.C.'²

In the great task of saving Britain and the Seas, the First Lord could, while thanking Fisher privately, still claim to the world that he had fulfilled his responsibilities, could answer the charges against him not only with good conscience but also with the exultant pride which satisfied the cravings of a high dramatic artist. He gained it afterwards in a great speech to his Scottish constituents. The terrible 'dangers of the beginning of the war are over and the seas have been swept clear; the submarine menace has been fixed within definite limits; the personal ascendancy of our men, the superior quality of our ships on the high seas have been established beyond doubt or question, our strength has greatly increased actually and relatively from what it was at the beginning of the war, and it grows continually every day by leaps and bounds in all classes of vessels needed for the special purpose of the war. Between now and the end of the year, the British Navy will receive reinforcements which would be incredible if they were not actual facts. Everything is in perfect order. Nearly everything has been foreseen. On the whole surface of the seas of the world no hostile flag is flown.'³

¹ The accounts of these battles are mainly taken from *The Times* of the 10th and 26th of December 1914 and the 19th of January 1915. See also *World Crisis*, pp. 245-55. ² Bacon, *Fisher*, II, p. 158.

³ Speech at Dundee, the 5th of June 1915.

But now a new and unexpected drama affected the tenour of Winston Churchill's responsibilities. From the moment of Lord Fisher's return at the beginning of November, he had felt that the First Lord was interfering as a civilian in matters that it was imperative to leave to the admirals, whose head was the First Sea Lord.

When Prince Louis was in that position, he had not disputed the naval authority which his Civilian Lord had taken upon himself. In the first place, Prince Louis had a German name: secondly, he was no longer in good health. He could not but be tactful. Fisher's strong point was to be nothing of the sort. When he came back to the Admiralty he invented for files a special red label marked RUSH.¹ This was but another sign that the old admiral was another Winston, and one who as admiral was determined not to let a civilian give the executive orders to the Royal Navy. To the impetuous and authoritative temper of Fisher, in fact, Winston's personal direction of the Navy seemed simply an interference: and enterprising as Fisher was, he was trained to a deliberation and thoroughness which made him impatient of Churchill's improvisations, however brilliant. After the meetings of the Admiralty Board, Churchill as Chairman would often with his own hand draft the orders which were what he believed to be the executive decisions of the meeting: but that belief was not always in accord with the mind of the admirals. It was something vaguer and more sudden. He was apt to be carried away by the optimism and enthusiasm of his ardent nature. 'It was impossible to forecast from one day to another where his imagination would lead him.'² It was true that in a series of shocks he had had his warnings: but had he profited from the

¹ Bacon, *Fisher*, II, p. 161.

² Bacon, *Lord Fisher*, II, p. 168.

lesson? It seemed not. He was impatient of the indecisive and weary operations in France and Flanders: he doubted if they would ever lead to a victory. Must he not, therefore, with the Navy, initiate operations in some other quarter of the earth that would attack the Germans unexpectedly, and so win the delayed arbitrament of war?

The two fields of action which attracted him were far removed from one another: one, first suggested by Lord Fisher, centred on the Kiel Canal. the other, first suggested by Sir Maurice Hankey, was the Dardanelles. Fisher's plan, pressed with much energy by Churchill at the turn of the year, was to seize a German island (preferably Borkum) in the Bight of Heligoland, invade Schleswig-Holstein, command the Baltic and so enable Russia to land troops at Stettin, which was only ninety miles from Berlin. Denmark must be forced into the scheme. For this Churchill argued at meetings of the Cabinet with a rough dynamic eloquence: but no-one was persuaded. And though Fisher had made Churchill his preacher for his scheme, he was anything but happy over affairs as a whole and complained to Hankey that on purely technical matters he was always being overruled. 'He out-argues me,' complained the aged admiral, who was feeling uneasy about both the present dispositions of the fleet and the orders that might suddenly change those dispositions. 'Though I think the old man is rather difficult,' said the judicial Asquith, 'I fear there is some truth in what he says.'¹

A week later both First Lord and First Sea Lord came to the Prime Minister to complain. Winston, having abandoned Fisher's great Baltic project, developed a new one, the bombardment of Zeebrugge, while still pressing for an attack on the Dardanelles. Fisher, naturally cherishing his own plan for invading Prussia, disapproved of both. Asquith asked them (it was his way) to compromise: 'Give up Zeebrugge,' he said

¹ Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 57.

to Winston. 'Let him have the Dardanelles,' he said to Fisher. But Fisher remained uneasy: and well he might do: for he had proved at an earlier commission on the Dardanelles that such a project was, as a great naval operation, practically hopeless.

By this time Hankey's project for the Dardanelles was becoming with Churchill an obsession. He saw in the power that held the Bosphorus the central bridge of the world, from which empires would turn east or west to mastery. He looked at this war of the twentieth century with the eye of Constantine or Belisarius. He remembered an earlier conversation in Constantinople, when he had argued with the German Ambassador, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, for joint rights in the railway from Berlin to Baghdad.

'After one has made a bed', replied the tall Ambassador from the Rhine, 'one doesn't care to turn out of it to make room for another.'

'But one might share it', smiled Churchill, 'as man and wife.'¹

He had met Enver in Berlin: he realized the strategic value of the Levant. He saw in this whole project the decision of an epoch, 'Press forward to the attack therefore as quickly as possible,' he urged; 'take Constantinople; take it soon.'² The whole scale of the project dazzled and captivated his imagination then and for months after.

'The army of Sir Ian Hamilton, the fleet of Admiral de Robeck are separated only by a few miles from a victory such as this war has not yet seen,' he said to his constituents at Dundee, and broadcast through *The Times*. 'When I speak of victory, I am not referring to those victories which crowd the daily placards of any newspaper. I am speaking of victory in the sense of a brilliant and formidable fact, shaping the destinies of nations and shortening the duration of the war. Be-

¹ Ephesian, *Winston Churchill*, p. 152.

² Speech in House of Commons, the 15th of November 1915.

yond these few miles of ridge and scrub on which our soldiers, our French comrades, our gallant Australian and New Zealand fellow-subjects are now battling, lie the downfall of a hostile Empire, the destruction of an enemy's fleet and army, the fall of a world-famous capital, and probably the accession of powerful allies. The struggle will be heavy, the risks numerous, the losses cruel; but victory, when it comes, will make amends for all. There never was a great subsidiary operation of war in which a more complete harmony of strategic, political, and economical advantages has combined or which stood in truer relation to the main decision, which is in the central theatre. Through the Narrows of the Dardanelles and across the ridge of the Gallipoli peninsula lie some of the shortest paths to a triumphant peace.¹

But when it came to the admirals, they thought less of the end than of the means. Fisher knew the Dardanelles. He had commanded a battleship there as far back as 1878; he had been Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet during the Boer War. He had long since formed the opinion that it could not be done: but partly because of his loyalty to Winston, partly because he was again out-argued, partly because he saw that it was silence or resignation, he did not criticize his Chief to the War Council, and none of them asked him to speak.² Only assurance of disaster would justify resignation: but disaster could be averted if, the attempt failing, the ships were withdrawn in time. Out of loyalty to Churchill he did not press his views in the War Council. Churchill, in arguing his case, had suppressed the opinion of the naval experts.

The expedition began. The ships sailed out to the plains of Troy, and then the contingencies which the Sea Lords had foreseen, the strong adverse current of the water, the hidden mine-fields, the concealed guns on the hills, the weak armour

¹ Speech at Dundee, the 5th of June 1915.

² Sir W. Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, pp. 96, 97.

of the ships available, prevented the naval attack succeeding. That of the Army should have come at once; but when it came neither Kitchener nor its own commanders pressed home the attack with sufficient force, though until they did so the plan could not hold.¹ Kitchener was indeed opposed to any large concentration of troops in the East. He foresaw the disadvantage of an assault failing, but he refused to listen to Churchill's adjuration for further support. With his heart beating high, Churchill had watched the brave exploit of the landings at Cape Helles, followed by those at Suvla Bay: they might have succeeded, for there was a time when only a few Turks manned the trenches that were not attacked, trenches capital to the defence. But however brave the young midshipmen directing their pinnaces towards the beaches, however stubborn the Anzacs in their fight under General Birdwood, however skilful the commanders on the spot, the thing always broke down at the crucial point. The conception was magnificent, but '*never since the Crimean War had a military expedition been dispatched in so haphazard a fashion*'.²

'It was good to go so far as we did. Not to persevere, that was the crime.'³ That is Churchill's own judgement on the situation: and it is a fair one; but his enemies might ask, and have asked, why did he embark on a project for which he could not count on perseverance? Thoroughness from beginning to end: an elimination of risks of the enterprise: weight and support of the attack: those are the elements of military success. Churchill embarked on his project without them.

¹ For very clear words on this, see Sir John Fortescue, *Following the Drum*, p. 227. 'If the fleet was to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula and Constantinople, it was obvious that it could not occupy a territory of about 80 square miles and a large and populous city without a considerable military force. Kitchener, of all men, could not have been ignorant of this, yet he never said a word.'

² Sir John Fortescue, *Following the Drum*, p. 234.

³ *World Crisis*, p. 357.

Asquith had not given him due support,¹ but he had embraced more than he could hold; flown to the end without consideration of the measures and degrees. That, Bacon had written in one of his essays, is the weakness of young men: to 'pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly', and so stirring more than they can quiet, they fail in the conduct and management of actions.

It was Churchill's trouble that his temper was still youthful; and furthermore that he habitually formed his executive decisions after he had dined well. At ten o'clock, he would, as a young giant refreshed with wine, call his advisers together and, in the glow and geniality of the moment, impart the urgent designs of his hopefulness and then work them out round midnight. Fisher, who woke early and rose at five in the morning, reviewed these radiant projects before he had touched his breakfast: he was apt at such a time to find them not merely fanciful but irritating. So is the sobriety of morning apt to pass hard judgement on the gaiety of the night before. As the Dardanelles affair proved both costly and unsuccessful, Fisher remembered his warnings and he felt new dangers. On May the 12th he wrote to the Prime Minister:

'Instead of the whole time of the whole of the Admiralty being concentrated on the daily increasing submarine menace in home waters, we are all diverted to the Dardanelles and the unceasing activities of the First Lord, both by day and night, are engaged in ceaseless prodding of everyone in every department afloat and ashore in the interests of the Dardanelles Fleet, with the result of the Armada now there, whose size is sufficiently indicated by their having as many battle-ships as the German High Seas Fleet.'

That was Fisher's complaint on May the 12th and he felt he could stand being overruled no longer. Next day, he proposed to send to Admiral de Robeck, who was in command at the

¹ C. Addison, *Politics from Within*, II, p. 167.

Dardanelles, the following message: 'You must on no account take decisive action without our permission.' Churchill refused to allow this order to go, overriding the Sea Lords together. That same evening, he actually gave orders for the disposition of the Mediterranean Fleet, his telegram ending with the words:

'First Sea Lord to see after action.'¹

In other words, Fisher, who was constitutionally responsible for the technical disposition, was to be ignored till orders he disapproved had been actually carried out. Churchill's feeling was that this high emprise depended on a huge and decisive effort which he himself was prepared to sanction. 'I cannot consent', he wrote to Asquith, 'to be paralysed by the veto of a friend who, whatever the result, will say I was always against the Dardanelles.' The rent in the friendship of the two men was stitched together by one talk more: Winston followed that, however, by a long minute giving new and exact direction for further action in the Dardanelles. A secretary brought this over to Fisher's secretary in the night of May the 14th. Read in the light of morning, that minute struck Fisher as intolerable. He took his pen at once and wrote to Asquith to resign: then it was that he wrote also to Churchill: 'First Lord, I can no longer be your colleague.' He planned to flee swift to Scotland to avoid unpleasant scenes and questions.

'You promised to stand by me and see me through,' Churchill wrote, not without bitterness. 'If you now go at this bad moment and therefore let loose on me the spite and malice of those who are your enemies even more than they are mine, it will be a melancholy end to our six months of successful war and administration.'²

The two men, though placed so close together, did not meet. Fisher wrote again:

'You are bent on forcing the Dardanelles and nothing will turn

¹ Bacon, *Fisher*, II, p. 247.

² Ibid., pp. 256, 257.

you from it. NOTHING. I know you so well. I could give you no better proof of my desire to stand by you than by having remained by you in this Dardanelles business up to the last moment against the strongest conviction of my life, as stated in the Dardanelles Defence Committee Memorandum.

*'You will remain and I SHALL GO—it is better so. Your splendid stand on my behalf I can never forget when you took your political life in your hands, and I have really worked very hard for you in return—my utmost.'*¹

They tried to keep Fisher. 'In the King's name I order you to remain at your post!' wrote Asquith. But, fixed as an image in a Japanese temple, the dark face of the old admiral showed that his decision was relentless.² On the 19th he wrote again a long memorandum to the Prime Minister, saying he would never serve again under Churchill or Balfour. After three days his resignation was accepted. Those days had been full of hopes and fears for Churchill,³ but the incoming Tories voiced an inexorable fate. The heavy waters closed over his gleaming ardours. 'Winston', wrote Curzon, 'has been shot out of the Admiralty.'⁴

The noise of Fisher's reproaches had burst upon England at the same time as the secret was made known that the army was short of ammunition. It was more than old Asquith could face. He saw he must henceforward take the Unionists into a coalition, and in this coalition Winston, whose administration had been so often and so severely criticized, who had spent days of furious planning, high optimism and finally blank despair, was given a post which, in the words of Mr. Lloyd George, 'was reserved either for beginners in the Cabinet or for distinguished politicians who had reached the

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 452.

² Lloyd George, *War Memories*, p. 226.

³ Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, pp. 121, 122.

⁴ Lord Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, III, p. 125.

first stages of unmistakable decrepitude,'¹ for he was made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; though he continued to sit in the Cabinet, where his fertile brain was still busy, where he was treated with every courtesy and where he even kept his old seat on the right of Lord Kitchener, he had received a heavy and humiliating blow, a blow which changed his pugnaciousness to depression, to claims on sympathy, to charm.² And was it not, as Mr. Lloyd George said, quite unnecessary 'to fling him from the masthead, where he had been directing the fire down to the lower deck to polish the brass?'³

Of all around him in those distressing days it was the attention of Kitchener which had touched him most. The two had been reconciled before the war began. They had worked together on good terms for nine months while Winston was carrying on his fight with Fisher, and Kitchener a far harder fight with French, who was in fact doing everything he could to get Kitchener out. But at this point Kitchener came to Churchill with the words: 'There is one thing at least they can never take from you. When the war began, you had the Fleet ready.'

6

It was not until he finally resigned from the Cabinet that Mr. Churchill spoke out his whole case to the House of Commons, and, as Mr. Asquith noted at the end of it, the story was not then complete. He claimed that the records when made public would exonerate him from personal responsibility for naval mishaps. 'I take personal responsibility for everything that was done or not done,' he said, 'but it is not that invidious responsibility which falls upon a Minister who incautiously overrules his professional advisers.' He was able to

¹ Lloyd George, *War Memories*, p. 233.

² Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 124.

³ Lloyd George, *War Memories*, p. 234.

show that on September the 6th he had advised that reinforcements should be sent to Antwerp, though they were not actually sent until October the 2nd. With regard to the Dardanelles the point he made was not that his project had been successful, certainly not that, nor that it was worked out without error, but that it was undertaken with no carelessness nor levity. As for the Dardanelles, he had conceived the idea and commended with all his force not indeed as a certainty, 'but as a legitimate war gamble with stakes which we could afford to lose for a prize of inestimable value, a prize which in the opinion of the highest experts there was a reasonable chance of winning, a prize which at that time could be won by no other means.'

He explained that he had left the Admiralty not at the wish of the Prime Minister but as the result of pressure from the Tories, and he terminated his speech with an eloquent tribute to the staying power of the Allies. Small neutrals like Bulgaria, he said, might hesitate, 'hypnotized by German military pomp and precision. They see the glitter, the episode, but they do not see or realize the capacity of the ancient and mighty nations against whom Germany is warring to endure adversity, to put up with disappointment, to recreate and renew their strength and to pass on with boundless obstinacy through boundless sufferings to the achievement of the greatest cause for which men had ever fought.'

Such then was the temper of Winston Churchill when on November the 15th he resigned from the War Cabinet. He had thought of going as Commander-in-Chief to East Africa. He had learnt to paint. But all his schemes had been blocked. All that remained was to make an adroit defence. 'The House is always accustomed and properly customed to give and even to expect great latitude from a Minister of the Crown who has resigned his office,' said Asquith after he had finished speaking on November the 18th, 'and my right honourable friend has

taken advantage of that privilege in a manner which I think will be generally appreciated and admired. . . .’ After the judicial warning, his concluding words were a tribute warm and just.

‘I desire to say to him and of him that having been closely associated with him now for ten years in close and daily intimacy in positions of great responsibilities and in situations varied and of extreme difficulty and delicacy, I have always found him a wise counsellor, a brilliant colleague and a faithful friend.

‘I am certain that to the new duties which he is going to assume, having abdicated with great insistency those he has hitherto discharged, he takes with him the universal good will, hopes and confident expectations of this house and of his countrymen.’¹

If Mr. Churchill had been Prime Minister, wrote afterwards a great judicial authority, it is as certain as anything in the war can be, that he would have won through the Dardanelles.²

The reason for the failure was neither that he lacked the gifts of a Marlborough reincarnate nor yet that the fine old admiral’s experienced judgement was faulty. Each, of course, in his own way, was right. But they brought one another down because neither Kitchener nor Asquith had the mind to rise above route-marching and killing Germans to profit by the aerial and reconnoissant instinct of high strategic genius, and to co-ordinate it with technical completeness.

¹ Hansard, 18 November 1915.

² Birkenhead, *Points of View*, I, p. 26.

CHAPTER 7

Carnage in the West

From the moment Winston had arrived at Antwerp, he had forgotten the machinery of Cabinets and been absorbed in imitating Marlborough. Was he not made to be a soldier? Had he not spent the five eager years of his young manhood in the hot pursuit of wars? Had he not, in those wars, showed a precocious gift for generalship, seizing almost at a glance the essentials of an army's needs and chances? Those are high moments when history is hammered out quick by hard blows among the dangers of death; and for these he was made into a mixture not alone of vehemence, of high temper and of daring, but of 'clay and vapour and lightning of the universe'.

Never is the tiger so hungry as when he has tasted blood. Winston understood his craving for soldiership and command only after those fierce days at Antwerp when by native leadership he had assumed command and held the rich city against odds. His mouth, said Asquith, watered at the sight and thought of Kitchener's new armies. Were these glittering commands to be entrusted to mediocrities who had led a sheltered life mouldering in military routine—to dug-out trash—when a man with his talent and enterprise could only watch admirals at work? Was he not made for military glory?¹ Those were the questions to which he returned month after

¹ Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, II, pp. 45, 46.

month, and more insistently as he saw the summer of 1915 lead to the collapse of his project at the Hellespont. He might regain his reputation, he would at least cool the fever of his blood if he could again face danger, conceive plans, direct tactics and lead men against odds to victory. To remain through all the high adventure of battling armies chained in such a dungeon as the Duchy of Lancaster, that would be unthinkable, intolerable; his glory extinct; his happy state swallowed in misery long drawn out, for no matter how heavy the reverse, in him as in the fallen angel

*'the mind and spirit remains
Invincible and vigour soon returns.'*

As soon as Churchill was freed, he gave his whole attention to preparing for French a memorandum on new devices to sustain defence, or disguise attack. Tanks, for which he appropriated the money and took the responsibility, were the most successful and far-reaching innovation of the war.

Even before the war began, Churchill had come to terms with French. They had worked together, to prepare troops for France, and once or twice in the course of the war Winston had hurried to the front, there to receive from an irate but confiding commander the causes of his resentment against Kitchener. Winston had understood. His sympathy now received its reward. A car from the Commander-in-Chief met him at Boulogne and drove him to the Headquarters in the Château de Blondecq to be offered a brigade.

Now war had much changed from the days when, on the sands of the Sudan or in the bracing air of the veldt, Winston had fought in Africa. This affair of constant pressure in mud and blood against the German Army had to be studied direct. Lord Cavan sent him, therefore, to a battalion of Grenadiers. However much Churchill might inveigh against dug-out trash, he was really a dug-out himself.

It was now fourteen years since Churchill had been on active service. There had been polo from time to time, but his knife and fork had given him his only regular exercise. During that time, if never 'blown with insolence and wine', he had lived luxuriously in positions for the most part of high authority, and sustained by the best that his palate could savour. He had enjoyed luxuries and ease. His system had grown used to high living; and, even with the Grenadiers, active service, in that miserable and dangerous scene, meant in every way the endurance of hardship. An icy drizzle, the red flash of the guns, the desolate aspect of a shell-swept landscape, with its broken houses, its scarred tree-trunks, its rank weeds, with now and then from cannon or rifle the dreadful note of preparation, were his introduction to the trenches, the wounded and the killed. There for two or three hours by day or by night he would tramp about in snow, or slush, or mud, deepening in these new circumstances his impassioned study of the pride and circumstance of glorious war. The cannonade alternated only with fusillades; the parapets were not proof to bullets; the ditches were undrained. In the dark weather, no-one was ever dry or warm. Nothing flourished but the graveyard.¹

Churchill had been living a brief week in these conditions, admiring the spirit of the Guards, and its combination of military smartness with good temper, when a general of his acquaintance sent him a telegram ordering him to meet a car at some neighbouring cross-roads. Here, under fire, he waited an hour. He then heard that the car had by mistake been sent somewhere else and that the general, unable to wait, had gone back to his headquarters. Churchill, thoroughly disgruntled, began his journey back to the trenches by slip and

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 102, 103.

slide through dark and mud. It poured heavily. He was wet through, exhausted, sulky with anger. It annoyed him when at a Company Mess they told him he had been in luck. He could not see why; he remained furious with the general who had put him to such needless discomfort, not to speak of danger. But when he rejoined his company, he found that only a few minutes after his departure the dug-out had been shelled, the officer remaining there had had his head blown off.

'Suddenly', wrote Churchill, 'I felt my irritation against the general pass completely from my mind. All sense of grievance departed in a flash. As I walked to my new abode, I reflected how thoughtful it had been of him to wish to see me again, and to show courtesy to a subordinate when he had so much responsibility on his shoulders. And then upon these quiet reflections there came the strong sensation that a hand had been stretched out to move me in the nick of time from a fatal spot.'¹

Again he was overwhelmed by the conviction that a power other than his own, a power not blind or chancy but providential, solicitous, omnipotent, had presented itself immediately as a direct arbiter, and that from this power, when it makes its choice, there is no escape. Call it nature, fate, fortune, Seneca had said, all these are names of but one and the self-same God; and He had written with pen of adamant on plate of brass that Churchill should survive for other things.

3

Early in 1916 he was appointed to the Command of a Scottish battalion, the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers. He flung his whole imagination and heart into his regimental command, and won enthusiasms from his men. He began his command by a war on lice. He spoke often to the men, who were, as Scots,

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 110.

a little dour, to tell them that 'War was a game to be played with a smiling face'.¹ He threw himself into the drama of the moment with an appropriate costume: a blue French trench helmet, a hunting stock, and to remind himself that he had begun as a cavalryman, a riding-whip. He rode among them on a big black horse, and told them to sing, but they were too squeamish to sully his chaste ears with their ribaldries.²

As early as December 1915 he had written a memorandum called 'Variants of the Offensive', which set out the case for tanks. Seventy were already nearing completion in England, and built at his own order as First Lord. His plan was to set them some two or three hundred yards apart along the attacking line; then at a given signal they would move forward, for neither trench nor breastwork nor ditch could hold them up. Carrying two or three Maxims each, they could also be fitted with flame-throwers. Nothing but a direct hit from a field-gun would stop them

Churchill's idea was that they should advance to the enemy's trench and enfilade it, cutting the barbed wire as they went, and through the gap thus made the shield-bearing infantry would be able to advance. In a final note he added: 'If artillery is used to cut the wire the direction and imminence of the attack is proclaimed days beforehand. But by this method the assault follows the wire-cutting almost immediately, i.e. before any reinforcement can be brought up by the enemy, or any special defensive measures taken.'³

This brilliant prophecy meant an eye that could see not only

¹ See *With Winston Churchill at the Front*, by Captain X.

² Their favourite song was

*I'll paint and you'll paint,
We'll both paint together, oh!
Won't we have a hell of a time,
Painting one another oh!*

By changing the word 'paint' to other words, they fed their imaginations with tougher meat than they thought their C O. would swallow.

³ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 114.

an immediate transformation of fighting methods, but also the sweeping change of tactics that was to win battles more than twenty years forward.

The section of line held by his regiment was near that Ploegsteert in Flanders which the British Army knew as Plug Street. Here he remained not a thousand yards from the front for three months. His 'rest' headquarters were in a red-brick convent, where he as Commander had a large front room.

Here one spring morning after a spell in the trenches he began to deal with accumulated posts. Among his papers were proofs of 'Variants of the Offensive'. He had not gone far when a bombardment began which soon menaced the convent, and finally reduced the whole village to ruins. As the shells crashed nearer, he decided he had better move quickly, and leaving his correspondence on the table, he went with his adjutant to take refuge in a cellar, where as the bombardment increased they waited in increasing annoyance. At last the bombardment ceased. Churchill was able to return to his room but found it wrecked. He laboriously collected the papers he had left, but as he did so he noticed that one was missing: *it was that 'Variants of the Offensive' which told the secret of the Tanks*. This was indeed cause for consternation. Had he been surrounded by spies? Had a German on reconnaissance rushed in, seized the all-valuable paper and departed? Such fearful questions posed themselves in rapid and affrighting competition, which left Churchill in misery. It was not till several days later that he discovered the missing paper in his breast-pocket. In the minute of danger, his brain had acted quickly. He had seized the one paper that was all-important, left the others. So does the brain of genius act in an emergency. By processes too swift for consciousness, it seizes on the essential and acts accordingly; and then blots out its own brilliance.

Churchill had not been appointed to the command of his battalion without a question. Had it not been the promise of

French that when he had learnt the business of trench warfare, he should command a whole brigade? Once a general, he might quickly show his mettle, rise from a brigade to a division, assume a grand prestige, and recover in victorious movements the full glamour of his ancestor? Had not Milton written in *Paradise Lost* of the time when

*To overcome in battle and subdue
Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
Manslaughter shall be held the highest pitch
Of human glory?*

Had not Marlborough and Blenheim proved it right? Churchill must then through military command attain this highest pitch of glory. But at the very moment he was to be appointed to the command of a brigade French had fallen. From Haig there had been no engagement, and Haig would not readily enter into one. Reserved, cautious, impersonal, the new Commander would be the last to sponsor the rise of so sudden and incalculable a soldier. There was some friction between them. If a brigade had not been given before, it would not be given now. And now his battalion of Scots began to dwindle away. Some fell in battle: some were drafted to other regiments. If the regiment ceased to exist, what was to be done with the commanding officer? He could not pass unnoticed. His regimental headquarters had become a rendezvous which could too easily be a perennial source of incidents. One of these indeed had occasioned a good deal of comment. After visiting the spot, one of the most prominent Tories, Mr. F. E. Smith,¹ had been arrested by a Provost Marshal, and sharp words had ensued. Such things are disturbing to the military mind.

Besides Churchill talked so much. Once Lord Fisher had written to him: 'The Apostle is right. The tongue is the very devil! N.B. Yours is slung amidships and wags at both ends.'²

¹ Afterwards Earl of Birkenhead.

² Bacon, *Fisher*, II., p. 91.

It was but a week or two after the visit of Mr. Smith that Colonel Churchill applied for leave. His object was to attend in the House of Commons and make a speech on the naval estimates. Now a regimental commander who is called home on reasons of state to deliver a resounding speech is an awkward man to have in any brigade: it made the Army feel uncomfortable: it disturbed the hierarchy of discipline. That was the feeling of the Army. But there were also in London Churchill's friends: they required his presence: they felt that his dynamic mind was needed in London to conceive high projects, to impel them into the air with the violence of gunpowder.¹ That surely, they argued, was the most patriotic work for a man of the calibre of Winston Churchill. When he came out, he himself had been at the very top of his spirits; he had been almost rampageous.² Was it now, after those weeks of mud and blood in Flanders, quite the same thing? Besides there was the question of income. His private means were practically non-existent, and when he gave up the Duchy of Lancaster he gave up £4,000 a year for something not much above £400. The Churchill ménage could not live for long on that scale. Mr. Churchill had never failed in the virtue of fidelity to his family. All circumstances combined to urge that he should go back to London, and make some money by writing for newspapers, newspapers which would give him £500 an article.

On March the 7th, therefore, having returned, he made his speech on the Naval Estimates. It was a carefully prepared work of art, made good points and was well phrased. Yet it was an utter failure. Why? The reason was that it contained

¹ Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, II, pp. 76-9.

² Repington, *First World War*, I, p. 67.

an attack on Mr. Balfour and his Sea Lords as lagging in enterprise and effort: 'It is not enough saying we are doing our best'; and it ended with a sharp appeal to recall Lord Fisher as First Sea Lord. This was an extreme emancipation from rancour: its generosity might have won the Parliament and the public, but it did nothing of the kind. On the other hand, it deeply disturbed them. In the first place such forgiveness struck them as ultra-dramatic; secondly, it was hardly consistent with Churchill's obstinate enthusiasm for his darling project: but, thirdly, and much worse than these, it suggested that the British were themselves wrong to let Fisher go: and if Fisher, then perhaps also Churchill himself. But to convict a democracy of a mistake is a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Besides that the speech was interpreted as an appeal to the Prime Minister, over the head therefore of his Naval Minister, to dismiss his Sea Lords; and since the suggestion came from a resigned Minister who had been criticized and was gone, it was designated by Balfour himself as 'quite intolerable'.¹ It did its speaker harm, and he was obliged to set to work in other ways to recover his reputation. One way was certainly to write the brilliant articles, which brought a rapid return. But there were other ways than that. For the first time for ten years Churchill found himself in London and out of office. It meant a return to the social life he habitually lived, with many parties at his mother's house, and much brilliant talk uttered and heard. It meant that rapid and effective preparation of which he was a master of several subjects apposite to the conduct of the war; and at the same time it revealed an essential side of his nature as artist: he suddenly learnt to paint, and to paint extremely well. It was when he was out one Sunday night with his children's paintbox watching Lady Gwendoline at work the summer before, that rather empty summer of 1915, that the idea came to him; and next morning he bought

¹ See *The Times*, 8 March 1916, p. 12.

an easel, a canvas, and the tubes which mean painting in oils, and which allowed a rest to the impassioned furies of his mind.¹

'The change from the intense executive activities of each day's work at the Admiralty to the narrowly measured duties of a counsellor left me gasping. Like a sea beast fished up from the depths, or a diver too suddenly hoisted, my veins threatened to burst from the fall in pressure. I had great anxieties and no means of relieving them. I had vehement convictions and small power to give effect to them. I had to watch the unhappy casting away of great opportunities, and the feeble execution of plans which I had launched and in which I heartily believed. I had long hours of utterly unwonted leisure in which to contemplate the frightful unfolding of the war. At a moment when every fibre of my being was inflamed to action, I was forced to remain a spectator of the action, placed cruelly in the front seat. And then it was that the Muse of Painting came to my rescue—out of charity and out of chivalry—because after all she had nothing to do with me—and said, "Are these toys any good to you? They amuse some people." . . .

'Even at the advanced age of forty! It would be a sad pity to shuffle, or scramble along through one's playtime with golf and bridge, pottering, loitering, shifting from one heel to another, wondering what on earth to do—as perhaps is the fate of some unhappy beings when all the while if you only knew there is a wonderful new world of thought and craft, a sunlit garden gleaming with light and colour.'²

By July he had made advances to justify the hopes of Orpen, Lavery, Sickert, and painted pictures that good judges thought worth buying; one of his best was an interior of Blenheim.

But it was not after all his brush but his pen that was the instrument of his fame. And now his pen being freed by his departure from the Cabinet, he found how easy it was to make

¹ Sir E. Marsh, *A Number of People*, p. 248.

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 305-6, 307.

money. Sometimes it is true there came a command from the Government: as for instance to write on the Battle of Jutland. But it was for the father of a family a more solid satisfaction to get £1,000 for four articles in a Sunday paper: it pointed the way back to his salary as a Minister. 'How sad it is,' he said to Colonel Repington, 'that while I was slaving at Plug Street in the fore front of the battle, my reputation was going down and down! Everyone was scoffing at me, whereas now when I am talking on what is practically the front Opposition bench, and writing fiction, I am making a lot of money, and increasing my fame daily.'¹

There were two things that occupied him in the earlier part of the summer. One was the sudden drowning of Kitchener in the northern seas, and his weighing of a man, who had indeed forgiven him, but with whom he was not in real sympathy. Kitchener was cautious, thorough, just: but had he the swift and eagle eye to seize the moment when it comes to war and command, and from the gulfs of dark to see the one star that guides over heaving waters? Too late he had seen the need to reinforce Antwerp: too late he had sent men to the Dardanelles; and in each case he had robbed Churchill of that lost claim to greatness which success alone endorses. The country admired and trusted Kitchener: but was it right? The Cabinet had become doubtful, they had refused to give his absolutism free rein; he had been safeguarded at the War Office as the Sea Lords now safeguarded Arthur Balfour as Civilian at the Admiralty. Kitchener's last expedition to the Levant had shown up his lack of the supreme strategic sense. Such was the judgement of the Cabinet, such was Churchill's; and it received support in an unexpected quarter from the skilled and judicial pen of Sir John Fortescue.²

¹ Repington, *First World War*, I, p. 287.

² 'He has a reputation as a great organizer, but he was nothing of the kind.' *Following the Drum*, p. 246.

The other points which Churchill laboured in the summer of 1916 were the need for more energy in organizing resources and combating slackness and inefficiency. This was the burden of two great speeches in the House of Commons on May the 23rd and 31st. To the War Office, who wanted to comb other departments, he said, 'Physician, comb thyself!' The second complaint was of the losses on the Somme. He regarded those weeks of far-flung, obstinate and costly battle as a failure. By the 1st of August 1916 he had written a paper in this sense. His argument was that the German losses were much less than the British: in fact in the proportion of 1 to 2.27. The argument was to be elaborated through the years: it was part of that obstinate 'Easternism' which made him turn away from the Western Front to swift and dramatic blows in other theatres, and was therefore in close relation to the Dardanelles. He could now reinforce his theories with definite and immediate experience in Flanders: for surely it had been a very quaint idea that he should have high adventure and rise to glory in a field of operations which he had as such consistently deprecated, and even condemned.

His chief accusation was against Joffre. None of the earlier mistakes in strategy or tactics were in his mind worse than that 'insensate obstinacy', as he called it, 'which without superiority in numbers, without a due supply of guns or munitions, without any innovations in machines or method, without any particular manoeuvre, any pretence at surprise, in short, without any reasonable ground of success, continued to hurl the heroic but limited manhood of France at the strongest entrenchments, at uncut wire and innumerable machine-guns served with cold skill.'¹ Such had been the tragedy of 1915, a

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 548.

tragedy which Winston Churchill, after the failure of the Dardanelles had removed him to the Duchy of Lancaster, had, even with his painting, had ample leisure to survey from Britain. Such had been the tragedy which he had examined with the magnifying glance of regimental duties in immediate danger, and among the wounded, the dying and the dead, in the mud and cold and damp of winter in Flanders, He knew the ache in the ears which comes from artillery preparation for attack; he knew even the pervading inner horror of the conquest of fear—for it is a horror known to all brave men that are more than animals—when all the forces of nature are in tumult within. He had seen young men sensitive with the artificial nervousness of extreme civilization, young men not toughened by barbarity, fighting not merely the hand-grenade, the bullet, the bayonet and the bomb, but what was more terrible than mutilation, fighting that battle for the control of the mind which was fought in the storm by old Lear when he cried:

*'O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet Heaven!
Keep me in temper, I would not be mad.'*¹

Such struggles, he knew, were the measure of heroism for a subaltern not less than the nameless Flanders earth, where

*in the marsbland past the battered bridge
One of a thousand graves untimely sown,
Here with his comrades of the hard-won ridge,
He rests unknown.*

Churchill knew in short the full meaning of a casualty list. All the former mistakes he now saw renewed and increased in the Battle of the Somme, that ghastly push when casualty lists were heavier than ever before, when Picardy supped full with horrors. How many of the finest and the bravest men were being struck down for a mere caprice of generalship? Churchill pressed the case home with all his heart. There may have

¹ R. Sencourt, *Peace and Politics*, p. 94.

been an answer that this great attack on the Somme saved the line farther eastward at Verdun, that it dented the Western Front and lowered the enemy's morale, that it cut down nearly half a million of the best German troops:¹ even Ludendorff admitted that in this battle the Germans were exhausted on the Western Front; but to Churchill this battle remained a blunder and a disaster, and he attacked it with all his force in a Secret Session of the House of Commons.

He watched it on to the end with a misgiving which was equalled only by his sense of the drama of Verdun, where by reiterated attack, ruthless, relentless, remorseless beyond any mood of old Fisher the fighter, the Germans aimed at breaking the heart of a nation, the heart of France. Which then made the greater mistake, the German generals who were so obstinately prodigal with life at Verdun, or the Allied generals who were equally obstinate at the Somme? The question might well have provoked cynicism. But cynicism in Churchill's mind was chequered and shot with high lights of admiration. If on the one side the Somme was a horror of misconception, it shone with epic glory. 'A young army, but the finest we ever marshalled, improvised at the sound of the cannonade; every man a volunteer, inspired not only by love of country but by a widespread conviction that human freedom was challenged by military and imperial tyranny, they grudged no sacrifice, however unfruitful, and shrank from no ordeal, however destructive. Struggling forward through the mire and filth of the trenches, across the corpse-strewn crater fields, machine-gun fire, conscious of their race, proud of their cause, they seized the most formidable soldiery of Europe by the throat, slew them and hurled them unceasingly backward. . . . Martyrs not less than soldiers, they fulfilled the high purpose of duty with which they were imbued.'²

¹ See Sir C. Oman in *A Criticism of the World Crisis*, p. 59.

² *World Crisis*, p. 654.

So, as busy with his practised pen in painting pictures as he was with his new instrument of the brush, Churchill filled the days till the Asquith Government fell, and he hoped at the change that he would return to a fighting administration. Again he was disappointed. On November the 16th he delivered another speech in the House of Commons to press for the construction of merchantmen, built to foresee universal service. And why not do these things now? he concluded. 'The nation at war is an Army and must be directed, organized and rationed as an Army. That is the brutal fact to which we are being hurried remorselessly by events we cannot control.'

6

When Lloyd George remoulded the Government at the end of 1916, he formed a War Cabinet including Curzon, Henderson, Milner and Bonar Law, and on looser terms Balfour. To these Lloyd George would gladly at once have added Churchill, whose genius he admired. 'His fertile mind,' said the new Prime Minister, 'his undoubted courage, his untiring industry and his thorough study of the art of war would have made him a useful member of a War Cabinet. Here his more erratic impulses could have been kept under control and his judgement supervised and checked before plunging into action. Men of his ardent temperament and powerful mentality need exceptionally strong brakes.'¹

Such was the judgement of the Prime Minister: and he admitted that it brought into consideration 'one of the most remarkable and puzzling enigmas of his time'. For in spite of his brilliant qualities, Mr. Churchill had at that time few followers and many enemies. Bonar Law, whose judgement Lloyd George always respected, thoroughly distrusted him, and tried to keep him out. 'But is he more dangerous *for* you

¹ Lloyd George, *War Memories*, p. 1067.

than when he is *against* you?' asked Lloyd George. The answer was, 'I would rather have him against us every time.'¹

The news was conveyed to Mr. Churchill himself by Lord Beaverbrook, who met him dining with Mr. Smith. 'The new Government will be very well disposed to you,' said Beaverbrook. 'All your friends will be there.' Churchill understood. 'Smith,' he cried out, 'this man knows that I am not to be included in the new Government.' '*Smith*' to his particular friend! He was furious with disappointment: he took his hat and coat and walked out of the house.²

This unjustified Conservative opposition was so strong that for some months it kept Churchill out of a post for which his every gift was peculiarly fitted, the Ministry of Munitions. One Minister after another wrote to protest against the proposal. It threatened to produce an actual revolt against the Conservatives. Could they give a reason or was their only reason for implacability their resentment against a renegade from their party?

One Minister felt him to be 'a dangerously ambitious man'.³ Another Minister said that 'in the opinion of all of us he will be an active danger in our midst', adding that his appointment would be intensely unpopular in both the Navy and the Army. 'They admitted that he was a man of dazzling talents,' wrote the Prime Minister, 'that he possessed a forceful and a fascinating personality. They recognized his courage and that he was an indefatigable worker. But they asked why, in spite of that, although he had more admirers, he had fewer followers than any prominent public man in Great Britain . . . they thought of him not as a contribution to the common stock of activities and ideas in the hour of danger, but as a further danger.'⁴

¹ Lloyd George, *War Memories*, p. 1067.

² Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, II, p. 290.

³ Lloyd George, *War Memories*, p. 1069. ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1070, 1071.

Lloyd George being himself a man of genius took a different view. In that resourceful mind, in that tireless energy, that high endowment of vision and imagination, he saw a force that, if duly supervised, would be invaluable. Had not Churchill at once understood the value of tanks? The Dardanelles idea had not been properly carried out, but as an idea it was brilliant. Mr. Lloyd George made up his mind. He guessed there would be mistakes, but he felt that he must discount them by all that he would gain; he must run the risk. And though the announcement of his decision was greeted with fury, the Prime Minister rode the storm and waited till achievement justified his choice. That, however, was not until the 16th of July 1917, when Bonar Law had been won over, when Northcliffe was away in America, and when the *Morning Post* and its party could be ignored.¹

Churchill, in spite of his doubts of the war in France, was avid to return to office. His self-assurance convinced him that he could do great things: he suffered tortures when he thought lesser men were mismanaging the business. In high events he must exercise that genius which combined with the capacity for hard work, the exuberant rush of ideas from a nervous system always boiling to eruption. He hit out at work like a boxer: for the fighter's soul was in him, like the artist's. His fault was his excitability. For when his power was absolute, and his stars were high, his tone and bearing were the despot's.² His anger struck like forked lightning from the lowering sky: his rash judgements raced to extremes. He sent out schemes which no thoroughness could overtake. But coming as he did from a tradition of service in the art and science of government, his heart and soul were those of a charging knight, single and for England.

¹ Hugh Martin, *Battle*, p. 150.

² Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, II, p. 82, 137.

CHAPTER 8

Under Lloyd George

It was the greatest relief for Mr. Churchill to be back in the Cabinet that summer of 1917, and to be engaged on work which threw him so closely in touch with the war as the Ministry of Munitions. The huge pioneer work in that Ministry had been done by Lloyd George himself in the preceding months: it was then that production had reached its peak: it was in that Ministry, too, that Neville Chamberlain, the Mayor of Birmingham, had shown a phenomenal capacity for national administration. But to Churchill it offered a field for enterprise, for exciting experiences in France, and for regaining as administrator his reputation—he appeared in the Cabinet like a ‘crescent moon modestly pushing a silver horn outside the black cloud of popular disfavour’.¹

There was the business of dealing with wastage; there were opportunities for constructive suggestions on strategy; there was the question of pressing new devices, new variants of the offensive such as tanks, but above all there was the question of personal relations with the Commanders in the Field. For it was on the projects of these Commanders that all war plans hung.

On these Churchill had defined his views more and more acutely. If he thought the Somme offensive wasteful, what was he to say of the succeeding months when the French Army were committed to Mangin and Nivelle? It was on the 27th of

¹ V. W. Germain, *Tragedy of Winston Churchill*, p. 250.

December 1916 that Joffre had been given a marshal's baton to console him for dismissal from his supreme post. Busy from month to month in reading the congratulations which poured in on him from every quarter of the world, Joffre had taken with great calm his power to have men killed, whether enemy or Frenchman; his routine had been placid and leisured, in the worst days of the carnage, he had always a good appetite, and he slept well. In his office there were no maps: on his table no papers. But now his life of unruffled authority over blood and death had come to an end. The grim struggle of Verdun was thrust on other leaders, Mangin, the ferocious warrior, hero at once and butcher, reckless of every man's life and not least of his own, Mangin, who defied his seniors and bullied his subordinates, Mangin, who would leave his command to fight rifle in hand at the head of his troops; beneath thick black bristles of hair, eyes and teeth gleaming, eyes of hawk and beak of eagle, epic figure of the virility of France at war. Mangin was at Verdun under the command of Nivelle: Nivelle modest, urbane, lucid, charming but the biggest butcher of them all. Beguiled by his Chief-of-Staff, Colonel d'Alenson, who was saturnine by temperament, and, being consumptive knew that his time was short, Nivelle aimed at the total destruction of the principal bodies of the enemy. Bleed, bleed, bleed. Such was the programme which this delightful Commander unwaveringly sustained through the spring of 1917. It was a grim moment, for the German submarines were portentously successful in their harrying of Britain's ships. The prodding question of Admiral-of-the-Fleet Lord Fisher, was 'Can the army win the war before the navy loses it?' Sustained by this British fear, Nivelle threw into the attack battalion after battalion of the men of France and her ally. Around a wide salient stretching from the Chemin des Dames almost to Rheims, the armies of Nivelle scrambled forward through mud day after day to daring and to death.

In vain! The reaction to such rueful waste of effort was the reaction of flesh and blood. The men were demoralized: in sixteen different Army Corps there were mutinies. Out of 15,000 Russians, 6,000 were killed or wounded (and nothing gained!), the remaining 9,000 revolted. On May the 15th, this glorious experiment was brought to an end. Nivelle was dismissed. Churchill became more critical than ever of this western war. New luminaries arose—Foch, Castelnau, Pétain.

2

The trouble with all these men, and Churchill knew it well,¹ was that they were none of them Freemasons of that Grand Orient which was still a cabal of intrigue for revolution in Europe, in that long patient plot to dethrone tradition in Church and State, which was headed among politicians by Clemenceau, among generals by Sarrail. With these men the national question was almost subordinate to another: would a defeated France be worse than a conservative France? Therefore they must never allow Catholics to come forward as the saviours of their country, and control its armed forces. As long as possible, supreme command must be refused to Pétain, to Castelnau, to Foch.

But in 1917 events had proved too strong. On May the 15th, when Nivelle was dismissed, Pétain had become Commander-in-Chief. He was occupying the supreme position when two months later Churchill went to the Munitions.

When the army's nerve was cracking, Pétain, better than any other, could apply the restorative and the balm. Grave, patient, thorough, scientific, competent, he set to work to see not only that men should not bleed for obstinate desperation, incompetent planning or mad ambition, but that every legitimate grievance should be removed, all confidence re-

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 505. English freemasons not being anti-religious have nothing to do with this plot.

stored. He went to battalion after battalion to talk things over with the officers, he saw that leave should be apportioned justly, and soldiers cared for, rested, encouraged when on leave. He stopped the carnage where it was useless, and while some upbraided him for caution and delay, he healed, cured, reconstituted for France her sickened and surly battalions.

Not only were there maps in his room, but on these maps were coloured labels and with them graphs so that he could see at a glance what divisions were fighting on either side, what reserves there were, and what were withdrawn. Railway lines and roads, marked in colour, showed the sources of supply.¹ He saw that the Germans having the superiority, the Allies must be above all prudent and patient. You cannot have strategy, he said, till you have exhausted the enemy's reserves: to do that when France was short of men was no light problem. In *The Times* he was described as a hard hitter who had surveyed with calm and measured the situation in all theatres of war. 'This great chief', said *The Times*, 'has raised himself by sheer talent, hard fighting and great force of character, from a Regimental Commander at the outbreak of the war to Army Group Commander, and though the French armies have a rare galaxy of talent at their disposal in the higher offices, General Pétain is by general consent the chief most fitted for the onerous duties now confided to him. He enjoys the entire confidence of the French Army. He has all the courage and coolness of his fellow-countrymen of Northern France, and he is peculiarly fitted to cope with the present situation, which demands prudence and patience from British and French alike.'² His two leading maxims were *Voir grand*, and *Agir vite*.

But perhaps generalship was not the most remarkable quality of the mind of Philippe Pétain. In his relations with governments a similar soberness supported a similar courage.

¹ Repington, *First World War*, I, p. 548.

² *The Times*, 1 May 1917.

This was not the man to stimulate by deceiving word, a policy of confidence which the later event must belie. 'I do not think he will promise his Government the moon,' said *The Times*.¹ If it was brain which politicians wanted, they must go elsewhere. As John Fisher was in the Royal Navy, so was Philippe Pétain among the soldiers of France. He had no delusions about the competence of the Palais Bourbon: he had said that it would be better if till the war was won parliament was prorogued. That was not meant as a practical plan, but it was one that set on the deputies an estimate that made them feel duly desperate.² What he would give them would be a statement of accounts where they could weigh out their assets against the full heaviness of their responsibilities. His jokes were sharply pointed; his sarcasms about the politicians were as ruthless as his concern for his fighting men was considerate and warm. Asked what were the qualities required for a French general, someone had said: (1) brain; (2) courage to take boundless risks; (3) blind confidence in the general staff. 'Yes,' answered Pétain, 'I agree, but you must fix 3 between 1 and 2, or it will escape.' In every turn the incisive wit of Pétain showed him as high in judgement and character as he was in the science of war. He was a man who refused either to be fooled by personal optimism or to flatter others by estimates he knew to be false. Besides, he made no compromise with Freemasonry.³ Grave, impressive, distinguished, he added the authority of personality to his mordant wit and thoroughness.

Conservative by training and by judgement, he realized to the full the wealth of tradition in the Church: but he failed in the logic of life by not adding to his conclusions the sacrifice of his own time to worship. He even said in 1917 that he had not been to Mass for thirty years. In this, he differed from the two

¹ *The Times*, 1 May 1917.

² Repington, *First World War*, I, pp 549-50.

³ 'Il n'est pas des nôtres,' said Sarraïl.

other generals who in the stress of war were quickly rising round him, Castelnau and Foch. Both of these were considered irredeemably religious. And of Foch, who had had a motor accident and who went to pray in church every day, the masons added: 'His nerves have given way: he is finished.'

Churchill was now to measure the faculties of these captains of the host against those of their British colleagues, Haig and Robertson; and against the will of the two political leaders, in Paris the gorilla Clemenceau, in London the mercurial and dynamic man of Wales who was now ruling the British Empire. These were the men with whom he was to work. The four great events of his tenure of the Ministry of Munitions were the pressure of submarine war on Britain's supplies, the break of the Italians from Caporetto, the March offensive of the Germans on the Somme, and final resurgence of the Allies to triumph.

3

It was in the spring of 1917 that the graph of tonnage sunk by submarines shot up like Popocatepetl from 300,000 in January to 800,000 in April, remaining high about 600,000 in June. But her success had not only brought in America, it had provoked a defence. The best defence being attack, a supreme effort was made by Admiral Sir Roger Keyes when he blocked the issue of submarines from Zeebrugge; depth charges added to the means of defence. As the summer nights drew in, the danger was no longer crucial, though anxiety remained. But even as this care lessened, Caporetto suggested a new menace of collapse. Disgusted by the wretched state of their homes, dismayed by the loss of 2,000,000 for no immediate result, the brave Italians, to whom reason and goodwill were everything, began to hesitate about the value of their cause. Their mood changed. 'Let's go back home!' they began to say, and then suddenly as the storms of autumn broke among the Carnic

Alps, they threw down their rifles in thousands and splashed southward through the rain; for the Allied cause it was an immense disaster. But Lloyd George met it, and ten Allied divisions were hurried through the tunnel of Mont Cenis and over the plains of Lombardy to the valley of the Piave. On November the 18th Winston Churchill went to Paris to confer with Loucheur and the Italian General Dallolio. There were no munitions to spare, but the Italians must have some. Frenchman and Englishman were sympathetic and polite, but they could not pretend that they were pleased. Dallolio, however, was equal to the situation: firmly he stated his facts and his requests; definitely he won his colleagues' respect. Italy justified it. By a miracle the retreat was stopped, the advance held till in the following autumn she won the battle of Vittorio Veneto, and took her part in the general surge forward to triumph.

4

It was a relief to Winston Churchill when Sir Henry Wilson displaced Sir William Robertson as Chief of Staff. Here was no laborious plodder, but an Irishman with an elastic imagination, a swift mind, a wide range of view. With him Churchill fell into harmony at once. Wilson appreciated the role of tanks, and demanded at once that the tank corps should be increased from 18,000 to 46,000 men. This won Churchill's heart. And besides, Wilson was artist in exposition, master of the parable, vivid in surprises of phrase, whimsical, arresting, a man of comedy. 'Prime Minister, to-day I am Boche,' was his way of opening to the Cabinet the situation from the point of view of the German High Command. Another day he would be Bulgaria or Italy. To this he loved to make merry with French names; when he spoke to Clemenceau he addressed him direct as Tiger.¹

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 747.

One day he came to the Cabinet and stood beside the map. 'This morning, sir, a new battle,' he said. 'This time it is we who have attacked. We have attacked with two armies, one British, one French. Sir Haig is in his train, Prime Minister, very uncomfortable, near the good city of Amiens. And Rawly is on his left hand and Debeney on his right. Rawly is using five hundred tanks. It is a big battle.' Rawly was of course General Sir Henry Rawlinson, as Bungo by this time had become Sir Julian Byng.

Before Wilson told that story to the Cabinet, terrific things had burst on history. For although at no time had the Germans gained so favourable a position over Europe, although Russia had retired exhausted into revolution, although Italy was still a helpless partner, although France and England were anaemic from loss of blood, although the submarines still kept Britain hungry for fat and sugar, although the American armies had not arrived, although all these things combined to put Germany in a favourable position for the peace negotiations which the valiant young Emperor of Austria and his Empress had generously and eagerly urged, Ludendorff was mad with his thirst for blood and glory. And the Freemasons of France had been equally indisposed to listen to the proposal which Prince Sixte de Bourbon brought from Vienna. Therefore on the 21st of March 1918 the German armies pressed forward to a savage and prepared offensive. The object was to crush the British Army in the greatest onslaught known to history: an onslaught meant to be overpowering in plan and length and weight.

The British Army was based on Amiens, and for seven days it was forced continuously back by murderous pressure of hellish menace and noise on the nerves and flesh of men, tearing rents and gaps in the British battalions to the rate of 15 to 100 men, capturing furthermore 1,000 guns. In a week, the British Army had been forced back to where it was two years

before. How did the French act? On this point there is again a conflict of evidence. 'Pétain is sending up more reserves than we asked for,' are the words of Colonel Repington on March the 27th.¹ 'The British', wrote Mr. Churchill, 'were aghast at his cold resolve to break contact and leave them if need be to be thrown into the sea.'² The fact was that there was no unity of command, and Pétain believed that the main attack would fall upon his own division in Champagne. Time was to prove him right. It was in these circumstances that the Allied Commanders on March the 26th met at the little town of Doullens in Champagne. Pétain, though suave, was calm and determined; but it was Foch who, though prodigal of life before now, came forward indomitable and sanguine to rally the Allied armies under one command, and face the affrighting hour.

On March the 28th Mr. Lloyd George, in great concern at the week's work, summoned his Minister of Munitions to come and see him in bed. The quilt and pillows of the Prime Minister were strewn with telegrams and papers; and the situation seemed obscure. He was not sure that the unity of command was effectually working to hold the two armies together.³ Could Churchill dash over to Paris and really find out whether the French were making a big move or not? Hardly an hour had passed before the young Minister was in the train. He had chosen his old friend the Duke of Westminster to share the experience. They crossed the Channel in a destroyer and motored to the British quarters at Montreuil to see how Rawly and Bungo were weathering the disaster. Everything was marked by British calm. Haig was out taking his daily ride. The Chief of Staff knew that French divisions had come into action, but how effective they were, what their ob-

¹ Repington, *First World War*, III, p. 257.

² Winston Churchill, *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 158, 161.

³ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 165.

jective was, he could not say. The Duke and the Minister hurried on to Paris, arriving there at midnight, and Churchill spent the next day busy with questions of munitions. After that, on March the 30th, Clemenceau took him in hand, and in company with Loucheur, Churchill drove off over the pavé roads to Beauvais, where—beneath the magnificent fragment of a cathedral which had proved too lofty to sustain its roof—the supreme command of France measured in the hour of peril whether its own achievements could support its mighty projects.

There it was that Churchill first met Weygand, then Chief of Staff to Foch as Generalissimo. The minute they came into the room, Foch seized a giant pencil and strode to the map. He owed his reputation as a Professor of Military Science to the way he made everything clear to every mind by the drama and directness of the south. If he wanted to show how an offensive exhausts itself, he would take up a bucket of water and empty it along the floor so that men could see that sooner or later the most violent rush will slow and stop. He had a similar lesson to convey now to one whose language was far from being French, either in pronunciation or in grammar. '*S'ils savent que nous sommes gens qu'ils peuvent conter sur!*' was a phrase of Churchillian French that had once caught the ears of Asquith.¹ Foch realized the situation: if he could not talk with his words, he would talk with his voice, and with his body.

It all came from Foch in this way. 'After the fight on the 21st the Germans broke through on the 22nd. See how they ran. First stage of the assault. Oh! Oh! Oh!' The voice took on the deep tone of pain and dismay. 'How big. The 23rd;

¹ Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, II, p. 61. 'Winston was very eloquent in the worst French anyone ever heard.' Of the first Duke of Marlborough Sicco van Goslinga had written: 'Even his very bad French is agreeable.' *Marlborough*, I, p. 479.

second day of assault,' again the General pointed to the map. 'Ah! Ah!' he cried like a man receiving a wound in a vital part. 'On the 24th, third day of assault,' and it seemed as though the knife were being turned in the wound as Foch cried 'Aie! Aie!' the cry of protest from a French boy in intense pain: and he seemed to reel and writhe at a wound in his own body. And then he turned round from the map. He looked at his visitors and his body swayed from side to side. His hand moved up and down as though placed on a balancing scale. The anguish left his voice for a warning tone, solemn, vehement but now with a new deep note of mingled menace and confidence. 'Oho!' he cried. 'Fourth day! Oho! Oho! Oho!'¹

All the hearers knew that on that day the assault had begun to show signs of fatigue, the defenders to show signs of firmer resistance. They looked at the map. They saw that the conquered zones were shrinking in extent each day: as they shrank, the voice of Foch sank almost to a whisper as with a wave of the hand or shrug of the shoulder, he conveyed his impression of Ludendorff's failing effort. Until finally, as Churchill wrote, with '*Hier, dernière journée d'invasion!*' the whole attitude and manner of the French leader flowed out in nothing other than pity 'for this poor weak miserable zone of invasion which was all that had been achieved by the enemy on the last day. One felt what a wretched petty compass it was compared to the mighty stride of the opening days. The hostile effort was exhausted. The mighty onset was coming to a standstill. The impulse which had sustained it was dying away. The worst was over. Such was the irresistible impression made upon every mind by his astounding demonstration during which every muscle and fibre of the General's being had seemed to vibrate with the excitement and passion of a great actor on the stage.'²

And then, suddenly, after the whisper, came the loud tones

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 170.

² *Ibid.*, p. 171..

of firmness. 'They are held. Sure, certain, soon. And afterwards; ah afterwards. I shall see to that.' Such were the words of the man who began each day with what Clemenceau hated more than anything, half an hour in church at the mysteries of the Mass. But when Foch stopped, and all silently admired, Clemenceau stepped forward and flung his arms around the General's neck; and each clasped the other in a warm embrace. For the moment the two enemy Frenchmen had forgotten everything but France.

Churchill gazed once more at that scholarly face, more like a bishop's than a general's, saw beside him the erect and high-bred figure of that Weygand whom most believed to be the descendant of kings and emperors, and who had caught the secret not less of efficiency than of royal blood, and then down and away from that high gorgeous fragment of architecture at Beauvais to Rawly and his Fourth Army near Amiens.¹ There they found a man as typical of England as Foch was of Gascony: a quiet sportsman who in those grueling days was simple, cool and easy but who could not promise to hold his line. While they were taking the simplest lunch of cold meat, pickles and bread (it was always a memorable adventure for Churchill to eat anything so simple as that) a large grey car drove up. In it was the man known to the British generals as D.H., to Wilson as Sir Haig. He had come to ask Clemenceau for more Frenchmen; before long he had got them.

Then the French Premier claimed his reward: it was to see the battle. They went to the British line past officers worn out but for a round of whisky, and at last reached a mound where they could see shell bursting: as they returned to the road, one of these shells burst among a group of led horses. And then a wounded horse came towards them at a staggering trot. Clemenceau then showed the truth of his nature. He rushed at

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 172.

the horse, seized its bridle and held this while its blood filled a pool on the road. He glanced for sympathy at Churchill, and spoke in the soft tones of confidential rapture: '*Quel moment délicieux!*'

The night fell with a return to the soaring fragment of grandeur which marked the city of Beauvais. There in the railway station they entered a palatial private train to eat an excellent dinner faultlessly served in quiet and calm. They were in the presence of him who for a year had been in chief command of the French Army, Pétain, with his fine features and impressive moustachios, the model of dignity for an army, and now as always judicial, scientific, sure. With a skilled eye he watched the chain of events, as a practised physician watches the course of a fever. 'The first phase in which we now are', he said, 'is forming a front of any kind. It is the phase of men. The second phase is that of guns. We are entering upon that. In forty-eight hours we shall have strong artillery organizations. The next is ammunition supplies.' That he estimated would take four days. 'And the next phase is roads.' For they too had to be kept in repair.¹

So, methodical, intrepid, imperturbable—assured against defeat because he knew the only way to avoid it was to meet it—Pétain was making the dispositions which in time were to prove the foundation-stones of victory.

After midnight Churchill slept in Paris at the end of the most crowded and absorbing day of his savorous life. He always enjoyed taking risks.² Twenty-two years later, at a greater crisis still, Churchill was to hurry to France with the object of meeting some of those French generals again.

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, pp. 177, 178.

² Sir N. Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, II, p. 663.

For five weeks the unified command attained little. The French staff believed that the British were responsible for a disaster that almost turned the common front. The English on the other hand hoped for a swifter and stronger French support than that which actually came. Co-ordination was bad. On April the 27th Churchill was himself again in France and breakfasting with Haig. The Commander-in-Chief had just tasted his coffee when a paper was brought to him that the Germans had broken through the French line near his own. Haig hurried into his office with the typical words: 'The situation is never so bad or so good as first reports indicate.' Churchill was left to reconnoitre for himself, he went to the headquarters of the British general, Sir Alexander Godley, who was the most concerned. The guns were roaring; but nothing else had happened. The French had telephoned that it was all a mistake.¹

A month later, however, the French sent through shocking news that was not a mistake. The mass attack which Pétain had foreseen in March now burst upon the Chemin des Dames. It was in the beginning of June that the French themselves recoiled before the sudden and cruel pressure of Ludendorff's attack; doubts increased, and the brilliant days which make summer in France a glory could not console the people for the increasing fear that Paris itself would fall. But amid all its horror, this disaster brought to the British a certain satisfaction in that they saw they had companions in the humiliating business of retreating. It was one of the characters of the war that the French and English never quite loved or trusted each other, never escaped entirely from a certain sense of friction and rivalry. This lack of confidence was particularly marked in the case of Pétain and Churchill.

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 773.

Perhaps the last desperate throw of Ludendorff would have succeeded had it not been that at that moment American reinforcements were available, reinforcements whom lack of experience made only more generous with the blood of their lives. In the March retreat President Wilson had said to the envoy of King George, 'I'll do my damndest.' These words were now made good by thousands of young men, harder, heartier, and less nervous than those of Europe.

Again Churchill rushed across the Channel. On June the 8th he was again in France, enjoying the suavity of France in the rich perfumes of the Forest of Compiègne, talking to French soldiers whom he found, calm, gallant, even gay, as they awaited what was next day to hurry many of them into eternal life and place that charming scene under the control of the hated enemy. So he found inspiration for his work of supplying as from an inexhaustible store those engines of battle which the Allied armies needed. Much of it came from factories around Paris, and it was a matter for urgent decision whether they could be kept fully working when a further push might make it too late to evacuate their machinery before the Germans took it. Churchill's work was not battle but the material of battle: the provision of steel, of coal, and of nitrates in the factories where they were needed; and then the manufacture of guns, bombs, shells, gas, tanks and aeroplanes, so that no matter how heavily they were used up, yet more would be transported to take their place. So the weeks of June and July passed till one day he passed out to Versigny to see Mangin, who after disgrace had been rehabilitated and had pushed forward to that early counter-attack which was the beginning of the end. Eyes and teeth still gleamed, though grey hairs appeared now among the raven black ones. His heart still beat high. 'Foch planned it,' he said to Churchill. 'Gouraud made it possible. As for me, I put it through.'¹

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 793.

None, however, expected early victory. Churchill's eyes were fixed steadily on the succeeding year; but on September the 20th he went further. He said that the British artillery by the weight of its fire, and working in combination with bombers in the air, was wearing down the enemy's resistance. Ludendorff had admitted that in a single month 13 per cent of his guns had been destroyed by enemy artillery. 'Push on with this plan,' wrote Churchill on September the 20th, 'and the German artillery will soon be exhausted. We are perhaps within reasonable distance of decision and final results.'

As the autumn days shortened the Allied armies struck northward over the fields and through the woods of Picardy and Champagne; and while Foch with his famous pincer movements forced the enemy out of France, Churchill hailed on September the 27th an event which he claimed had justified all his obstinacy over the Dardanelles. Bulgaria had been defeated. The German effort was collapsing in the east! After Bulgaria followed Austria as Lord Cavan's forces struck forward over the Piave. By November the 11th, the Kaiser had fled, and a defenceless Germany had placed herself at the mercy of the enemy she had so long harassed.

Churchill was in London looking from his office towards Trafalgar Square. He suddenly realized that the immense operation of production and supply, of which he was master, was useless. The three million men he employed for it must be hurried from his control. And then as the clock struck the eleventh hour on that day of Saint Martin which was the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the people heard the sirens cry and the bells fill the air with thankful sound. The streets of London filled and surged with people hurrying to the King, who was the symbol and centre of their order. Winston Churchill waited for his beautiful wife, and then with her drove slowly into the crowd to congratulate the Prime Minister; they found themselves receiving an ovation. 'It was

with feelings which do not lend themselves to words,' he wrote, 'that I heard the cheers of the brave people who had borne so much and given all, who had never wavered, who had never lost faith in their country or its destiny, and who could be indulgent to the faults of their servants when the hour of deliverance had come.'¹

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 819

CHAPTER 9

Under Demos

Alas! the hour of deliverance had *not* come. 'Killing Germans while Germans killed Allies twice as often,' said Churchill, had all been a mistake. What had the British Army in France actually achieved? Victory 'proved only less ruinous to the victor than to the vanquished.'¹

The whole course of the gigantic effort depended on the sense in which it was being propelled. It is not enough for a man to create an engine of hugest power: but that engine must be wisely controlled for a purpose both deliberate and good. The energies of victory had long ceased to be so: they had far outrun both prudence and the moral purpose. On either side nationalism in its heroic effort, called patriotism, had gone mad: again and again, one is forced back to the startling parable which Mary Shelley had given Europe a hundred years before: the parable of the devoted scientist who, inflamed with a false ambition, had created a being with all the faculties of man except that which, in Aristotle's words, makes him man: the fire of the Divine within him. War, above all the inventions of applied science in manufacture, had been to man as the monster was to the Frankenstein who had created him. Men in their struggle for the devices and appurtenances of life had omitted to lay hold on life itself.

For it simply was not true that the Allied victory was all

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 534.

that mattered, that democracy was the sum of every virtue, militarism the source and quintessence of ill. The truth was that both were growing rapidly out of date. Both were inadequate to provide a new life of industry and commerce with an adequate scheme. Both lost sight of the ways of life in losing touch with that religion which, eternal in its principles and elastic in its expediency, could alone flash the needful truth on the murky hours. Through the later years of the war from the only great organization which remained above the contagion of nationalism and whose lips are ever repeating the evangel of life, from the eternal city which, among the majestic monuments of the Roman peace which are the noblest legacy of the ancient Empire, had built herself a centre and a capital for a universal religion of hope and faith and human charity, from holy Rome a sweet sane voice arose. It was such a message as Christians might have hoped to hear from a Vicar of Christ on earth. It was the voice of that wisdom which makes her doctrine shine like the morning and sends forth light afar, who is the minister of them that would order the world according to equity and righteousness; who would lead them soberly in their doings and preserve them in their power.

The voice of a great Pope had been insistent: it had been echoed in England by an older statesman who had the ear of his King. Lord Lansdowne's letter, like the Pope's pronouncements, restated that the great issue was economic: it pointed to the ruinous extravagance of the war; it recognized the need of that trade which alone sustained the masses of Europe to run full and free in their own channels. It insisted that the real need was peace—a just because a balanced peace.

And the Papacy was aware that while democracy was fighting militarism, both were menaced by something separate from either. For years Russia had been rotting from political leprosy, and now from Russia arose a vast and deadly menace: for death is not quiescence: it is the violent activity of forces of

corruption. It was then, from before the time that the bloody baboons of Bolshevism, as Mr. Churchill called them, had swept on to Christian Europe, that from its central organism the Christian religion had voiced its prophetic warning. It is considered even now fanciful to mention it: for men still confuse the reality with the dream. And the Pope was the last person to whom Mr. Winston Churchill—or for that matter, any other man of politics in Britain—would have turned for guidance. They learnt the Vatican's wisdom afterwards when some native instincts were enforced by the lessons of inexorable years.

2

It is not difficult to see from the coign of vantage to which we have been carried by succeeding events that every object which victorious nations should have kept in view was lost from sight in the murderous struggle of the killing. The victors were stunned by the blows they had received, blinded by the blood streaming from the wounds in their foreheads. When at last their stubborn foe was stricken down and helpless, they could think of nothing but revenge or of measures forcibly to hold down the danger. They were like the wounded tiger.

They were dominated by the ferocity of Clemenceau, and his mind can best be understood by a very simple comparison. If a small boy had at last succeeded in getting down with the help of others the big bully who had prevented him for years from playing the games he most enjoyed, he would be glad to keep his foot on the bully's neck: but alas no small boy can spend his life in that operation. A rush, a wriggle, an appeal to bystanders for reason and a chance, and the bully is up once more, and has to be persuaded by other means to change his ways. Such was the parable of Franco-German relations in the years after the armistice.

The war had set three great tasks to the victors: to deal with Bolshevism; to reconstruct Europe according to the needs of the contemporary world which was living in terms of international trade and production; and to buckle a distempered continent within the belt of justice. They failed signally in each.

Terrible as the waste of war had been, it offered vast opportunities to swift and constructive minds, to men with imagination and ideals. Lloyd George and Winston Churchill were both such men, and together they could, if they had faced an effort greater than that of the war, have led the peoples to a victory, so sure and lasting that, under their guidance, not merely their own countries, but Europe and the world, would have enjoyed such prosperity as they had never seen. Without such leadership, the sacrifice and epic of war were robbed of direction; its absorbing narrative became

a tale

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

But such a leadership required both virtues and an energy that Europe had lost. Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude, perseverance had been displayed until the source of them ran dry; but as Churchill said already on the 23rd of February 1919: 'The true measure of nations is what they can do when they are tired.'¹ For rule and victory, the old energy was needed more than ever to sustain the virtues which war had drugged into a four-years' sleep: the virtues of temperance, stableness, mercy, bounty: the virtues founded on justice and crowned by benevolence. These must be re-awakened and come forth, prudent and clear-sighted, in the vigour of refreshment and of youth.

¹ Speech to English-speaking Union, 23 February 1919.

It is to the credit of Churchill that he more than any other member of the Allied Governments spoke the high words of magnanimity. It was a distressing circumstance of the Allied warfare that it centred on blockade, and blockade meant foodstuffs for the army. But since foodstuffs, not being contraband of war, are required as much for the civil population as for armies, the effect of the Allied warfare had been to distress, to weaken, and finally to kill the women and children of the countries they engaged against. Of all means of waging warfare, none reaches so far as blockade among people who take no part in warfare; it afflicts the sick, the wounded, the young, the pregnant mother and the unborn child with lasting and depressing weakness as those who are wounded in a vital organ, and pass as useless invalids their remaining weariness of days.

This method of attack had spread its effects wherever the German language was spoken, and on into Hungary. In all those places alike the masses of the people were starving. The first meaning of the word armistice was to release them from famine.

It was Churchill who, as he dined with his Prime Minister on the evening of the Armistice, argued for this humane and decent gesture.¹ As he saw the hungry, his simple words were *feed them*. But no-one would listen: his words were ignored. The process of starvation was continued for eight months while the Allies debated in Paris the plans of settlement which years were to prove unjust, improvident, provocative, fragile and finally futile. They were all dominated not by the thought of Europe as the serried and interdependent whole which a century of invention had made her, but even where in fleeting

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 21.

moments, they considered Europe's good, they thought of this in terms not of economy but of races and language. Their conceptions went back to the eighteenth century, to the American and French revolutions. Where men wanted bread, reason, co-ordination by trade between their forests and their fields on one side, and on the other their cities and their mills, they were given arbitrary tariff boundaries, restrictions and the devices which enable such words as liberty and equality to enrich a plotting clique. Europe exchanged the ways of life for that fetish of race which mesmerized alike the German and the Jew. She was handed over from kings and aristocracies to the tender mercies of Freemasonry.¹

All were dominated by fear of Germany. And here the confusion became madder still. Everything pointed to the need of creating a Germany calm, because economically satisfied, while at the same time safe because restrained from revenge. The Allies succeeded in neither. They made Germany into a democracy, and then made things so uncomfortable for that democracy that it was discredited. 'There is one form of tyranny', said Ludendorff, not inaccurately, 'which the German people never have endured, and never will endure, and that is parliamentary government.'

It was not long before Churchill had summed up the situation which he tried hard to prevent. He had kept to his motto: 'In victory magnanimity: in peace goodwill', but who had taken it up? The time soon came for him to survey the alternative. 'From one end of Germany to the other an intense hatred of France unites the whole population. The enormous contingents of German youth growing to military manhood year by year are inspired by the fiercest sentiments and the soul of Germany smoulders with dreams of a war of liberation, or revenge. These ideas are restrained at the present

¹ For the growth of new sinister influences round Clemenceau see Repington, *First World War*, II, p. 382.

moment only by physical impotence. France is armed to the teeth. But physical force alone, unrestrained by world opinion, affords no durable foundation for security. Germany is a far stronger entity than France, and cannot be kept in permanent subjugation.¹

Nor did Churchill believe that the political situation disclosed the fullness of the threat. 'Men had extended the scope of war with designs not only to destroy with poisoned gas and higher explosives, but to spread blight over crops, anthrax among horses and cattle, pestilent microbes along the blood streams of human creatures till the whole world would be subject to disease, corruption, ruin. Such then', said Churchill, 'is the peril with which mankind menaces itself. Means of destruction, incalculable in their effects, wholesale and frightful in their character, and unrelated to any form of human merit; the march of science unfolding ever more appalling possibilities; and the fires of hatred burning deep in the hearts of some of the greatest peoples in the world, fanned by continual provocation and unceasing fear, and fed by the desperate sense of national wrong and national danger.'²

Such was the problem to which Churchill gave the title *Shall We Commit Suicide?* and which from the first hours of the Armistice he had the prescience to affront. But the people were in no mood to hear or mark such words. The men who spoke them would have had to go out into the wilderness to feast on locusts and wild honey. The voters of England filled the new Parliament with men who had done well out of the war. The newspapers, under the leadership of a man who had done particularly well in that way, yelled for revenge and reparation. A weary, greedy, and paganized nation took up the cry. The national passions which, in his own words, had even before the war been unduly exalted in the decline of

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 249.

² *Ibid.*, p. 251.

religion, now spread their underground fires in lava and destruction upon an already famished earth.

It is hard for a speaker to resist the mood of his audience. Can he resist it? Had not the Pioneer of Europe's religion warned his followers not to cast their pearls before swine, not to give that which was holy to the dogs? There are moments when the wisest words are vain. And besides, at that moment, men were fooled by two things new to England: firstly the virulence of national propaganda, which told them they were the paragons of every virtue, and their enemies the monsters of every iniquity: secondly by a word which they could stretch to mean anything but which gave them the lying dogma that the voice of the people was the voice of God. Mislead them by newspapers, flatter their vanity, excite their cupidity, provoke their revenge, till you have made them mad: then ask them to press their slaving enemies as you can press a dry lemon till the pips squeak: and their roar of answering passion will be still the voice of God. Such was the new impact of the word 'democrat' on the conscience of Britain. Its effect was certainly not less than that of poison gas. So were fulfilled the words with which Churchill had first won fame in the House of Commons: '*A European war can end only in the ruin of the vanquished and the scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of Kings.*' Certainly time was proving it true that no Cabinet, no Cabal, no King, was as vindictive as democracy.¹

4

But such words of warning were rare. It was so much more congenial to the mood of Britain to be thrilled. On the 16th of December 1918 Mr. Churchill had joined Sir William Birdwood to meet Australians and New Zealanders at a luncheon

¹ See page 61. Speech of the 12th of May 1904.

club: he had once again vindicated his expedition to the Dardanelles. 'All our dreams have come true. We have reached the end of the long long trail. And what a victory! I do not know what your feelings are but I can tell you that for myself in the five weeks which have passed since firing ceased on the Western Front, I have felt a new and fresh inward satisfaction every day in contemplating the magnitude and splendour of our achievement and our success. It grows upon one like a living fire burning within. It fills our hearts with pride and thankfulness that we have lived at such a time and belong to such a race.'

That was the tune for which a victorious people called. On such words as those elections were easily won. And on the strength of winning that election, Winston Churchill left the subsiding Ministry of Munitions to become on the 19th of January 1919 the Secretary of State for War and the Air.

As after an interval of just ten years during which he had learned much, Winston Churchill wrote of those days that preceded and followed the election, he wrote at the head of his chapter one Greek word. Twelve times it arrests the eye at the head of the page: The word is DEMOS.

It is the presage of a cankering disaster: of what Churchill himself describes as weakness, discontent, faction, and disappointment, diminishing prosperity, vanishing hopes, increasing worries.¹ In his own mind, Churchill kept sane. He had wits enough to see that it was not worth while to make Germany pay, for the simple reason that payment was not feasible. Gold and securities were not available in sufficient quantities. The import of German labour was not desired. Payment in goods would damage English trade. So it really could not be done;² but neither he nor any other had the high constructive plan where courage fortified foresight.

¹ *Aftermath*, pp. 10, 31. 'A cruel disillusionment was at hand for all.'

² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

What patriotism required at that moment was to pass into temporary oblivion, to face obloquy. It was clearness of vision and moral courage to insist that the Pope had been right. Then it was that the decisive occasion came, and the tide was at the full for leadership to give back peace and advancement to Europe.

*Then to side with truth is noble, when we share her wretched
crust
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosp'rous to be
just.
Count we o'er earth's chosen heroes—they were souls that stood
alone
While the crowd they agonized for hurled the contumelious
stone,
Stood serene and down the future saw the golden beam in-
cline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme
design.*

In later years Churchill dreamed his dream: he sketched the opportunity and the vision. He pictured Wilson securing a mandate from his country as a whole and bringing with him a delegation of the Republican Party in the United States: he pictured Clemenceau in a mood of generosity thinking of the long safety of France by coming to terms with Germany in a desire to raise her from her defeat and her misfortunes. He pictured Lloyd George putting wisdom before democracy. Together they would summon Foch to tell them how to free Russia from the tyranny of Bolshevism. And the statesmen of Churchill's dream said: To do this we must invite the co-operation of Germany. This will enable a proud people to avoid humiliation in defeat: they will slide from strife into

co-operation. *Germany shall be invited to aid in the liberation of Russia and the rebuilding of Europe.*¹

As for the fears of France, her security was to be guaranteed by the English-speaking peoples.

And finally he asked the League of Nations to provide the nucleus for a unit of universal currency and to keep for her own uses of universal peace the secrets of chemical warfare. The heroes of war who proved themselves the guardians of peace, these, and not war-profiteers, would be the new nobility. Such was the generous project of magnanimity and goodwill which Winston Churchill locked as a hidden treasure in the silent recesses of his mind, but it was shut within the ivory gate. And before long he writes: 'I awoke from my Armistice dream, and we all found ourselves in the rough, dark, sour and chilly waters in which we are swimming still.'²

5

His post, as we have seen, was that of Secretary of State for War in a Coalition Government. It freed him from the party business which had disgusted him while he was working with the Liberals before the clash with Germany distracted them. It pleased him when he thought of the men of his own class whose houses he loved to visit, the Duke of Marlborough, the Duke of Westminster. But it pleased him not least when he thought of an old friend in Parliament like General Jack Seely,³ or a new friend like the new Earl of Birkenhead. In that taste for high living and hard exercise, in the superb racing quality of the mind, in the skill of dealing with events in words, in all the give and take of electrical ideas in which the brilliant talker delights, as the lover delights in love, Churchill found his heart cemented to that of Birkenhead. They had combined in 1911 to form the 'Other Club', they had before the war

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ Now Lord Mottistone.

done a long tour together in the Mediterranean, they had already become warm personal friends conscious that in the great issues they were, as apart from the noisy rancour of party, really at one. And now they had another bond, enmity against Bolshevism. Nor was Birkenhead, who was now Lord Chancellor of England, his only congenial colleague among the Tories. There were the two elderly men, Balfour and Curzon, who, although far from being sincere friends to one another, each represented the high Tory tradition, and with them was Austen Chamberlain. With all these he was bound by many common interests, in the pursuit of settlement. All shared his dislike of Bolshevism, and with these were now two Liberals who had little love of party feeling, Edwin Montagu, the eager able Jew (brother to a great potentate of the silver market), whose passion was progress in India: the other a scholar, an historian, who threw on every question the calm silver moonlight of a scholarship, beautiful, urbane and just. In Herbert Fisher, the historian, Churchill found a friend who was all that John Fisher was not, who admired him for his genius and his honour as long as life was his.¹

In this Cabinet Churchill worked for nearly two years as Secretary of State for War, and then ceded that Ministry to assume the administration of the King's British dominions beyond the seas, as Minister for the Colonies. It was in the first of these posts that he was the more busy. The great questions were those of three countries: Russia, Turkey and Ireland.

But all these personalities, distinct and eminent as they were, were but voices of the night when one compared them to the man who in the prestige of victory assumed for a year or two a role not incomparable to that of Napoleon III sixty years before—the Emperor of Europe. Mr. Lloyd George had glow, generosity, assurance, will power, imagination all leading to eloquence. Like a bold bull in a crowded arena he car-

¹ Ephesian, *Winston Churchill*, p. 238.

ried all before him, and did his things alone. Extremely swift to take his view and state it picturesquely, he suffered from one defect: to have no background for the study of foreign affairs except his enthusiasm for his first chief, Gladstone.

Gladstone in Eastern affairs had one guiding lamp: the fact that Russians and Greeks belonged to a great Christian communion; one bugbear: the Sultans and their Turks. Lloyd George now took up this tradition in his own way. He resisted the Turks in their rapid recovery under the brilliant, prudent and ruthless genius of the Macedonian modernizer, Mustafa Kemal. He supported the fervent liberal Venizelos in his plans for a high future for the Greeks, as virtually leaders of the Levant. And he glossed over all that was ghastly or menacing in Bolshevism.

This placed Winston Churchill in an invidious position. With every root and fibre of his soul he detested Bolshevism: to him it was a disease that had twisted and tortured the soul of Russia as a man is tormented by cholera. His project was to support the Russian armies under Denikin, Wrangel and Koltschak who tried to maintain the traditions of Western decency against the Bolshevik horror. Such was the great episode of 1919. It was not for Winston Churchill, 'to command the peace even with the same austerity and garb as he controlled the battle'. It was not for him at the War Office to initiate a military policy—that he found all ready; it was his work to support it and carry it out. And these he did with all the ardour of his soul. His mind was absorbed in an area of vast oriental monotonies, where from the fertile peninsula of the Crimea, Russia's sunny Riviera, to the frozen darkness of Archangel, armies, supported by British detachments and provided with British ammunition, fought, without an organization behind them, a long vain fight.

Once again, the idea was excellent but thoroughness was wanting.

There was no reason why the anti-Bolsheviks should not be provided with the surplus ammunition, for the only alternative was for it to rot. There was every reason why they should be helped, for Bolshevism rampagous would menace Europe in many ways. 'It is a delusion,' wrote Churchill on the 15th of September 1920, 'that all this year we have been fighting the battle of the anti-Bolshevik Russians. On the contrary, they have been fighting ours.'¹ What was the use, he asked, of supporting all the neighbouring States against Bolshevism, if Bolshevism is to be left free from within to overrun those States?

6

But all through that time Churchill's mind had been alive to one calamitous possibility: the idea of Moscow linking with Berlin. He had sensed the danger soon after the Armistice. 'We must be very careful', he had said on the 23rd of February 1919, 'not to let a brotherhood of adversity in some way unite Russia and Germany.'² Writing on the 24th of March 1920, he had repeated this warning. 'Since the Armistice my policy would have been "Peace with the German people, war on the Bolshevik tyranny."' But Lloyd George had carried out the reverse. 'And', said Churchill, 'we are now face to face with the results: they are terrible. We may well be within reasonable distance of universal collapse and anarchy throughout Europe and Asia. Russia has gone into ruin. What is left of her is in the power of these deadly snakes. But Germany may perhaps still be saved.' He therefore urged a British policy of help and friendship towards Germany.³ On the 15th of September 1920 his warning was still the same. '*We are*

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 259.

² *The Times*, 24 February 1919.

³ Cf. '*I had long foreseen the danger of Germany and Russia making common cause, and have frequently referred to it in public speeches.*' Churchill to Curzon, 26th of April 1922. *Aftermath*, p. 414.

*now within reasonable distance of a Bolshevik Russia thoroughly militarized, with nothing but its militarism to live on, bitterly hostile to the Entente, ready to work with Germany, and already largely organized by Germany.*¹ That is an arresting prophecy to recall after twenty years.

But, unless for his effort to organize the smaller States west of Russia into interdependence, Churchill spent his immediate labour in vain.

7

The other business at the War Office was the question of the settlement in the Near East. Again he counselled caution. A British force under Sir Charles Harrington held Constantinople, but the Greeks under a frenzied impulse from Venizelos, attacked Smyrna; and pressed down from the Bithynian Olympus round the lake of Nicaea. After a swift advance, the Greeks failed. Then for some months their forces maintained a precarious footing, all the Greeks in Asia Minor were either massacred or driven into the sea.

What was the line of Churchill in these events, events immensely complicated by the fall of Venizelos in 1920 and by the consequent return of King Constantine? Even in the teeth of such a conjuncture, Lloyd George, supported by Curzon, remained hostile to Turkey. But these two could not carry with them the whole Cabinet. Those who knew the mood of the army or who were responsible for India said No. For not supporting the Greeks Churchill had his own special reason: fear of Bolshevism. And so he too urged Lloyd George not to go too far with the Greeks lest he should throw the Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks.²

For some time the British were entrenched at Chanak in the Dardanelles. But the Turks, who did not provoke them, regained at last all that Mustafa Kemal had desired. Poincaré

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 259.

² *Ibid.*, p. 394.

at Lausanne reduced Curzon to tears,¹ and Churchill saw the Straits delivered to a new Turkey.

On the 2nd of September 1921 there was a reconstruction of the Cabinet. In view of what had happened in Russia and the Near East, Lloyd George thought it advisable to engineer a change. He sent Churchill to the Colonial Office. There an adroit man was needed to deal with the question of Ireland. It was indeed a ticklish situation, but a compromise was found which gave the Catholic counties to a new Dominion, and before the Whitsuntide adjournment of 1922 Churchill could put the whole case before the House of Commons with the words 'I say it and I boast it!' although he knew that a hostile tide of scepticism was rising against him. Lloyd George, by playing fast and loose with Curzon, had manoeuvred Churchill into a position like the stocks, both embarrassing and embittering.² And the patience of the Tories was giving way. At a meeting in the Carlton Club on the 19th of October 1922 angry words were used, and a huge majority decided to end the coalition.³

Churchill was not yet an official Conservative. He was therefore obliged to contest the election as a Liberal follower of Lloyd George. That in itself was difficult, but added to this he was too ill to take part in the election. He lost his seat at Dundee. He belonged to a party with no future. He was ill. For an active genius, failure in the work for which one lives is a physical blow. And now everything seemed to fail; the stars had turned against him; for some months his world was blank.

His gloom and despondency were sad to see.⁴

'In the twinkling of an eye, I found myself without an

¹ Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase*, p. 274.

² *Great Contemporaries*, p. 282. Ronaldshay, *Curzon*, III, pp 315-30.

³ Marriott, *Modern England*, p. 515.

⁴ H. Martin, *Battle*, p. 202.

office, without a seat, without a party and without an appendix.¹ So does Churchill describe the hopelessness of the position in which he found himself at the end of 1922. Exhausted, depressed, disgusted, he suffered from the fear that at the age of forty-eight his tumultuous career had come sharply to an end.

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 213.

CHAPTER 10

A Duel with Money

Party politics were now reviving in a form which he had long disapproved and in which his best virtues and gifts held him back from success. The central position in Parliament to which he lent his boundless energies, and to which he was inclined both by inheritance and instinct, was dying out of Europe and he seemed to be falling into ineffectiveness between the dilemma of extremes. What had been the burden of the speech he had made at Dundee on the third anniversary of the Armistice? 'If we are successfully to combat the visionary doctrines and wild schemes, the capital levy and the confiscations of the Socialists, it can be only by an earnest and untiring effort of the social, intellectual and moral advancement of the people.'

'We seem to be moving back towards the days of party strife and tumult. Many people seem most anxious to see them renewed, but I am not among those who think they were the palmy days of British politics or who wish them to return. I do not think the country is in a fit condition to be torn and harried by savage domestic warfare. What is required now is not a period of turmoil but a period of stability and recuperation. Let us stand together and tread a sober middle way.'¹

But no! impatient Tories pulled one way, impatient Socialists in the reverse, and the Liberals, distracted by personal

¹ *The Times*, 13 November 1922, 18 b.c.

faction and rancour, were an example how one good custom can corrupt the world.

So the Winston Churchills went off to the Riviera to enjoy the colours of light and flowers, and he to paint the world of Cézanne; for a whole year he remained out of politics. When he returned in the late autumn of 1923 it was still to champion the middle way in a triangular contest at West Leicester. His object had been to attack the Socialist candidate, Pethick-Lawrence, but a Conservative had come in to split the anti-Socialist vote, and Churchill was again defeated. These two defeats had one result above rubies: they shook Churchill's confidence in *Demos*, and brought him to think out once more his whole position in contemporary history.

What was its significance? Surely it was clear that reform was being forced upon the Tories, and that they were fully alive to the need of advancement; the danger came from that party which with devilish haste was plunging the country into disorder, and which had no scruple in combining with the sinister forces of Russian Bolshevism. Bolshevism in the fixed view of Churchill was the danger which continued to threaten Europe. Pétain might come over to London, and talk about Germany re-arming, but meanwhile this other peril was immediately threatening the stability of Eastern Europe, and attacking Western Europe by a corrosion within, like the egg which the codlin moth places within the very heart of the forming apple, to hatch into a worm and eat its way out in a tunnel of bitterness and corruption.

Kill Bolshevism, and all Europe could proceed by immemorial paths to gradual reform, whether like Birkenhead an Englishman called himself Conservative, or like Churchill, he still bore the name of Liberal. But now the Conservatives were really Liberals. If they would only drop this Chamberlain fad of tariffs, which Baldwin had vainly revived, they were all that Churchill desired. He had begun as a Conservative:

his father had always been a Conservative. How could he approve leaders who in the manoeuvres of party strife would turn the Socialists into office, and thus have Bolsheviks brought back into Europe and into England? Yet this is what the Liberals did, Lloyd George taking revenge on those who had rebelled against him, Asquith still fierce against the Coalition which had ousted him. The thing so disgusted the reasonable and moderate Churchill, who always set his great sanities above party strife, that he abjured the name of Liberal, and when next he went to the polls, it was to fight a great independent election at Westminster under the name of a *Constitutionalist*. 'Coalition in our hour of need,' he argued, 'proved a far better stand-by for our country and for the Empire than party faction, however well worked up.'¹

2

He could see now that it was by the happiest inspiration that he had entered into that three-cornered contest at Leicester only to be defeated. At the time when he thought of the safe free trade seat he might have won at Manchester or elsewhere, he was furious. 'I could have kicked myself,' he wrote,² but now, reflecting further, he saw that it was owing to that same error of judgement that he had regained contact with the great party into which he was born and whose deepest feelings he had come again to share. So could he free himself from a Liberal Party that was indeed qualifying for Rosebery's definition of a slow-worm. Difficulties and struggle, Churchill reflected, had their place in the mysterious rhythm of our destinies.

*We fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.*

¹ Speech at Sun Hall, Liverpool, 4th of May 1924.

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 18.

And as he awoke in southern suns from disappointment and from resultant lethargy, it was to understand that there was after all a great place for him in the history of parliamentary England. He had loved Liberal progress, but it must indeed be progress. Such an advancement of the people towards culture and freedom had nothing to do with Bolshevism, which was the negation of both. Russia had never been the ideal, but at least from the time of Peter the Great, the Tsar had provided it with a directive of Western inspiration. The aristocracy were not perfect, but they read French novels, and imported French cooks. The Church was by no means perfect, but it too represented a spiritual power having affinities with Europe; the Poles were themselves Slavs, but Slavs latinized by their Catholicism; the Finns and Baltic peoples who played such a great part in the administration had German ideals of order, cleanliness and efficiency. But now all these alike were swept out of Petrograd and Moscow: Tsar, Aristocracy, Church, Poles, Balts. Their place had been taken by an Asiatic tyranny, worse than any tyranny of pampered or barbaric chiefs because it was exempt from the heroism and dignity of a man's essential greatness, because it had no development in family, but was assimilated to bureaucracy and the machine.¹

Such was the danger which was reaching out to the labour organizations of Europe and Great Britain, poisoning them with its propaganda and bribing them with its contributions. The Socialist Party was deliberately and wantonly corrupting the British nation—teaching them to sing the Internationale instead of the National Anthem: 'it was permeated from end to end with humbug'.² Against that every possible force in the country should organize, and, as a Liberal converted to Con-

¹ I owe this comparison of Tsarism to Bolshevism to a talk with H.E. the Finnish Minister, when we were both guests of Lord Queenborough in December 1939.—R.S.

² Speech at Liverpool, 7th of May, 1924.

stitutionalism, he would fight this with his individual genius against the official backing of all three parties. After contesting West Leicester, he turned to the Abbey Division of Westminster. The Master of Elibank, Mr. Gideon Murray, suggested that he should come forward as a Liberal Unionist and as such receive the support of the Conservative organization.¹ Churchill himself in his manifesto said that the Tory Party was the rallying ground of anti-socialism.² And if he had first put himself in touch with the Conservatives, they would have welcomed him. But both sides acted precipitately. The party organizers too soon accepted a man of large independent means, the son of General Nicholson, their late member. Churchill, at the end of a conversation, allowed his own name to come forward before he had made arrangements to take up the Master of Elibank's suggestion. Even as it was, he gained enormous support. At one time, it was actually announced that he had been elected, and he was already receiving congratulations when a fresh rumour made him anxious. Finally he heard that he had lost the seat by a bare 48 votes out of nearly 40,000, and that forty he would certainly have won had he had a day or two longer.³

No election had excited him so much. To fight in the centre of London for a constituency containing the Houses of Parliament, the Clubs, the Strand, Saint James's Street and Covent Garden, in such a cause, with such a backing; to pit the Press against a party organization, to claim the help of everyone who was magnetized by his genius was an exhilarating and noble effort to catch all eyes in England.

Long before the result was announced the Tories had seen their mistake. This was a man to have with them. They now

¹ *The Times*, 13 March 1924, 15. f. Mr. Gideon Murray is now Lord Elibank.

² *The Times*, 6 March, 14. e.

³ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 215.

asked him to join their party, and for the next general election, at the end of 1924, they offered him the safe seat of Epping. There he was elected with a majority of 10,000, and was immediately given a post he had coveted long since, the office which most involved the social development and policy of England within, that of Chancellor of the Exchequer. For the next five years he was, under Lord Baldwin's direction, in charge of the budget and the financial policy of Britain, and therefore of the Empire and of the world. He was now fifty years of age.

3

The new circle in which he found himself included, with some close friends, some who had never really liked or trusted him. Among the most congenial were Lord Birkenhead and now Mr. Leo Amery. Among elder men were three great Tory leaders: Lord Balfour, Lord Salisbury and, as Lord Chancellor, Lord Cave. There were the two Chamberlains: Austen, the experienced and able, with the task that was becoming the most onerous and important, Foreign Affairs; Neville with his eager eyes and curving nose, a paragon of common sense, busy in social reform at the Ministry of Health. There were other seasoned Tories: Joynson-Hicks, Hoare, Steel-Maitland, and with these a scholar and reformer, as it were a new Morley, lacking, however, Morley's radicalism, his agnosticism, his grace or his skill, Lord Eustace Percy; and as a great store of legal judgement set in a gigantic head, Sir Douglas Hogg, soon to be Lord Hailsham. Such were, under Baldwin, the principal figures with whom Churchill was now associated in a period which, in comparison with the swift changes that were to follow it, remained calm after the vast changes of the war, as a last example of surviving stability before the waters rose, and the old order was finally swept away.

Into this order, Churchill fitted in his key position as Financial Minister, central in relation to the realm of property and business to which England owed her greatness, and which made Government itself still a secondary and almost extrinsic thing in the country. It was then as a man yet in middle age with a vast experience that he took his place. He had had fifteen years in office. He knew how the Empire was governed. He had had long association with a man of genius equal to his own, and he had now been himself for several years strengthened by all those habits of mind which come with a comfortable fortune. In 1919, a cousin of his father's, and uncle of Lord Londonderry, Lord Herbert Vane-Tempest had died and left him a property in County Antrim, Carron Tower, and a private income of £5,000 a year. His mother had lived to see him invested with this ease before she died in the summer of 1921 and her own fortune added something to the store. To her he had been consistently devoted, and she died before age overtook her, a woman vital, charming, witty, to the last. Her sons both felt her loss. She had accompanied them in every phase and interest of their lives, and had herself saved up for Winston the robes of black and gold which his father had worn as Chancellor of the Exchequer. As he himself donned these robes from Randolph his father, he sent another Randolph his son to his father's Eton.

And he had now in addition to his London home bought a charming old house in Kent, Chartwell Grange, near Westerham. In that ample house, delightfully arranged and perfectly managed, he could still enjoy all that was best of traditional and contemporary England. He was now comfortably placed therefore in a fleeting decade of English life which was particularly pleasant. The taste of the time was one of ease and freedom while it still retained the old dignity. Taxes, even at 4s. 6d. in the pound, were not absolutely insupportable: servants, at least for houses such as his, were still excellent, and

not too difficult to find. Those investors who spread their holdings wide enough to share in America's boom found their loss by taxation compensated by an equivalent, and it looked for a moment as though the League of Nations would organize Europe as a unity against Bolshevism.

In this ample realm, not untinged with optimism, Churchill not only ruled as statesman, not only enjoyed the luxurious circumstances of rank, but he could fill all the cravings of his voracious genius by creative work. Whenever he was in the mood for it there was his painting: this filled out the scenes of nature and gave a new meaning to galleries and houses. Observe accurately and with refinement, watch how others have found a way to practise impossibilities, and then see what an addition is made to things in the country, how many new interests come into it, what depths of meaning and relation in meadow, grove, and stream, in hills, trees, flowers and air. 'So many colours on the hill side, each different in shadow and in sunlight; such brilliant reflections in the pool, each a key lower than what they repeat; such lovely lights gilding or silvering surface or outline, all tinted exquisitely with pale colours, rose, orange, green or violet. I found myself instinctively as I walked noting the tint and character of a leaf, the dreamy purple shades of mountains, the exquisite lacery of winter branches, the dim pale silhouettes of far horizons.'¹

When it came to the brush and palette, he found a new game to play. He found that he must make the point of light live again in points of colour: for the brilliancy of a picture would depend on the frequency of these points in any given area of paint or canvas. And what work for the interpreting memory! Just as composition was a question of proportion or relation, so the work of painting was a storing of memory, of memory trained and accurate so that it could take secure possession of the beauty contemplated. These then were the

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 310.

delights of painting: to see, to remember, to apply technique. 'I must say', cried Churchill, 'that I like bright colours.'¹

This affair of painting, then, enriched and taught him that all art is pattern or arrangement; and he went back to his other active art, the art of writing history, with a new zest, a new power to attain effects. Never in style could he excel the excellence of his earlier masterpieces, the *River War* and *Lord Randolph Churchill*. But he learnt to develop his particular art by writing history which was to mix it with his own reminiscences, to hang it like beads, as he himself said, on a personal thread.² Whatever scenes, whatever events, whatever men of action he painted, there was always one centre of interest, still one hero: Winston Churchill. 'I have been immersed', said Balfour, 'in Winston's brilliant biography disguised as a history of the universe.'³

In those years when he was without an office, and without a seat, without a party, he entered into a new possession: his vocation as a writer. Like his friend, Herbert Fisher, he was a historian who had himself moved as an actor in history: but in him action almost overbalanced observation. Yet all the more satisfaction to return at times and pause to enjoy the survey of what he had done; and then to make his contemplation into a new foundation and means for further drives in politics. Such then was the security, the amplitude, the completeness with which Churchill came back to office at the age of fifty. He came to Whitehall from creative work, from a home, and from a garden, and with an eye refreshed by intensest joy in beauty. His field of invention was large and resilient: the picture of his life had a background of sky: he had his roots in more perennial things.

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 422

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 313.

³ Dugdale, *Balfour*, II, p. 337.

Of all that he has written of himself, he has said least of these five years as Tory Minister. And, to tell the truth, they were not really successful years. He began by rather cynically denouncing free trade. His first big step was to restore the gold standard. When he came into power, the pound was some ten per cent below the value of the dollar: a strain had been added to the system of exchanges by the annual export to America of some thirty millions in gold, which Lord Baldwin in a hasty moment had arranged to pay. The banking system of Europe was being continually put out of balance, and London, as a centre of financial transactions, was losing prestige. Churchill's advisers believed that if he could restore the pound to its relation to gold, London would win back her financial reign, and with an endless supply of credit rebuild her power. That view was in no sense a personal one. It came direct as a recommendation from financial experts, including Sir Otto Niemeyer and Professor Pigou. It was the inevitable view of the conservative economist.

For the rest Churchill argued that in this capitalist State he must use the resources of wealth to assist a scheme of insurance and pension which would provide against accident, illness, death, or misfortune, where up to that time no provision had been made. He was thinking not merely of a small pension for those of sixty-five, but of means for maintaining those who, by sudden and undeserved misfortune, found themselves widows or orphans, for those in fact who were desolate, miserable and ill.

The pension scheme succeeded, the return to the gold standard proved distinctly questionable: it had finally to be abandoned. That failure was not of course the personal failure of the Chancellor; nor could it be justly blamed on the Govern-

ment as a whole. They had merely accepted a view that was held both by their experts and the Bank of England. At a distance, both have needed to revise their opinions. For it penalized manufacture for the advantage of finance. It helped the lender rather more than the producer.¹

It was the enterprising economic expert, Mr. Maynard Keynes, who was able first to point towards the mistake. For if you raise the currency by ten per cent, you must either risk competition to that extent or else you must cut down wages and costs accordingly. The human mind counts in figures. Men reckon more easily by figures than by real value: it is therefore very difficult to force down wages, and wait for goods to cheapen accordingly. The result was that imports were encouraged, exports discouraged. This turned the balance against British trade.

Now the real wealth of a country does not of course depend on the amount of her gold supply. It is her power to supply her own needs. A world enriched by invention had every means to supply its needs if the machinery of credit were working properly. The first step required was for the banks to establish credits in relation to production, so that business men should enter on new enterprises, and provide a means for increased trading, for a forward movement. That was the remedy Keynes proposed: but it was not one which the Chancellor was able to accept. 'Deflation', said Keynes, 'does not reduce wages automatically: it reduces them by causing unemployment. The proper object of dear money is to check an incipient boom. Woe to them whose faith leads them to use it to aggravate a depression!'² The result of the Government's policy was to penalize certain particular individuals and particular industries, a policy so unjust that the country would not have allowed it if it could have understood what was being

¹ Mr. Lloyd George at the National Imperial Club, 8 May 1925.

² Keynes, *Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill*, p. 18.

done. And indeed when the Government saw what was happening, they had to subsidize the coal industry to the figure of £20,000,000.

Nevertheless, as a temporary measure, it looked as though the conservative economists and not Mr. Keynes had won the day. When in his fifth budget of the 15th of April 1929 Churchill summed up the result of his stewardship, he could claim certain things. He had cut down the expenditure on defence: he had cut down the cost of living; and as for the gold currency, he could point to two matters of great importance in which that had proved a decisive gain. The annual income derived from commissions and services rendered for foreign countries was £65,000,000. £300,000,000 a year were obtained from investment abroad. Each would suffer from a decline in the value of sterling. An exchange in collapse gave a hectic stimulus to export, everyone knew that: to maintain a sound currency when others were collapsing meant a temporary disadvantage in trade rivalry: but the real argument was that as Britain had such large invisible exports, since in fact she took in more than she gave out, she must buy with a sound currency. To buy cheap was more important to her than to sell cheap.

Such were the pros and cons of the argument as they looked before the collapse of the boom in America led to the long period of depression which, by the suffering it brought to the poor all over the Continent, changed their views of all policies, and led to a complete change of direction in European history.

5

In 1926 London was convulsed by a huge attempt of the Trades Unions to assume a power which the vote of the country had denied them. They tried to paralyse the country by a

general strike: they believed that if they could cut off supplies they could hold the capital to ransom. The cause of this was the withdrawal of the coal subsidy: the strike involved railways, road and sea transport, iron and steel, building workers, the power men in gas and electricity works, and the newspapers. Volunteers rushed to defend the cause of the average population, and in a few days the strike was broken. In the meantime, Sir John Simon in the House of Commons had declared it illegal.

Churchill threw himself into the battle with characteristic ebullience. He organized and edited in the office of the *Morning Post* an official sheet called the *British Gazette* which set before the people the events of the day, and foretold the triumph of the constitutional cause against the men who claimed absolute power on the strength of their trade unions.

In all these years Mr. Churchill lived as a hard-fighting Tory; not indeed delighting in party strife, not oblivious of his seventeen years as an official Liberal, but as one who saw in the Tory Party the only sound machine of progress, who found in it the means to combat Bolshevism. Bolshevism not only added menace to the vast ranges of Russia, with its 170,000,000, but in business, in politics, by violence, by intrigue, it was untiringly at work in a vast movement of corrosion and disintegration. Such had been the warning of *The Times* two days before Mr. Churchill produced his first budget.¹ Such was the considered conviction of the Conservative Government. To the chapter which tells of Lord Birkenhead's work in this government, his son has given the title: 'Fighting Bolshevism'. It was the thought which pervaded also the mind of his friend, Mr. Winston Churchill, and which provided the anvil for his hammer blows: for combativeness was still an element in his genius.

He looked round for allies in the fight: he found one in

¹ *The Times*, 15 May, 1925, leading article.

Italy, when he went there in January 1927. Mussolini had then been four years in power. He had sharply reverted from his temperamental violence, as shown at the time of the bombardment of Corfu and the Matteotti murder, to a policy of constructive planning for Italy and for Europe. Although his emigration conference had failed, and he had been forced back on a policy of Nationalism, he never lost sight of conciliation and co-operation among the powers of Europe, a co-operation to defend the social order against Bolshevism. All this had much in common with the political feelings of Winston Churchill. He too aimed at conciliation and co-operation among the powers of Europe; he too hated Bolshevism; he too was enthusiastic over Locarno; and his temperament enabled him to admire the strong man who, though not without great faults, centred in himself the cohesion of Italy in a new philosophy which gave a man rights and privileges in proportion to his function in industry and society.

Such then was the work of Churchill in these five years as a Conservative Minister: years in which Locarno, and the League of Nations, seemed a pledge of better times; years when the surplus of an American boom made things look easier than they really were; years in which he was able to lower taxation. But in Britain there were few delusions. Unemployment was enormous. Taxes burdened industry. There was no great constructive scheme. And the masses of the people were deeply dissatisfied. The collapse of the Conservative Government was at hand in the election of 1929. And all this in spite of the fact that the French made a corner in gold in order to browbeat Britain,¹ that the British were content not to share in the risks of a gigantic inflation which the bankers of America supported in relation to the mounting value of stocks and shares, and which persuaded Hoover,

¹ See Paul Einzig, *Behind the Scenes in International Finance*, Ch. IV, V; *The Fight for Financial Supremacy*, Ch. VIII-X.

their President, to cherish the delusion that they had banished poverty from the United States for ever.

6

But this perilous policy was now about to shake the architecture of Europe, as an imposing edifice of brick or stone is shaken by an earthquake. The fabric of world economy was a whole. American finance was a flying buttress to the high walls of that of Europe which could not stand erect without it. Churchill had not been able—he had not even attempted—to erect another in its place. And when the typhoon burst, and the great process of falling prices and deflated values began, all Europe felt the shock. It transferred men's attention first to the systems of business and banking which were more important than administrations and political policies, and then it found that this was leading to systems of national planned economies which in turn affected national armaments, those two things which, from his days as a young member of Parliament thirty years back, Churchill had sensed if not foreseen as the foremost peril of Europe and the British Empire.

The fact was that these American speculators in their haste to 'get rich quick' had not only undermined their own prosperity, but they had given a killing blow to the system of *laissez-faire* all over the world. Up to that time, *The Wealth of Nations* had been the Bible of modern England. Economic laws had been discerned which led wealth to the channels in which it was needed. But, as Churchill himself had observed, when he studied the sugar question in 1906, these economic laws are bound together with moral laws affecting the lives of men. It is an offence against social justice that men should be flung out to starve by the inexorable process of an economic upheaval. John Burns had been right: they had an elementary right to work, or when that failed them, to maintenance. Such

had been Churchill's work all along: as a Liberal, he had already abandoned the system of *laissez-faire* for a German alternative, a system of insurance. In him a social philosophy was always stronger than the ruthlessness of individualism. Man as man had the right to live.

But to talk of men's rights without also considering their duties would lead at once to disorder; to confuse privileges with rights was yet another confusion of thought. And besides the whole system of democracy was breaking down in Europe. Parliamentary government, said Churchill, was being undermined by universal suffrage. 'Government of the people by the people for the people' was in many states proved a mere illusion.¹ Something else was coming forward to take its place. Mussolini had made a revolution against parliamentary government. He aimed at replacing it by a functional vote: he substituted the electoral organization and the influences of the newspapers by his own judgement. He managed the people direct, and did away with the machinery of party, so that when there was penury in the household of the State they might plan together how the family should be fed. That certainly was economic nationalism; but, even if planned socially and nationally, was it really worse than that other system, which was still economic nationalism, against which Churchill had spoken as a Tory on the 29th of July 1903: 'Vast industries of poor people artificially stimulated, exciting considerable political power, and using that political power to maintain and even increase the artificial stimulation; giant trusts enjoying a complete monopoly of the home market, making enormous profits out of the home consumer, and no doubt using the wealth thus obtained still further to influence the Government machinery. As a result of this state of things, over-production on a prodigious scale, cut-throat competition between the tests for the free English market, enormous ex-

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 230.

portations at unprofitable prices and encouragements by the foreign Governments of this unprofitable exportation?'¹ Yes, that old system of *laissez-faire* had also led to economic nationalism.

Winston Churchill had pursued the same policy, whether called Liberal or Conservative. He was a constitutionalist, valuing tradition but aiming at spreading felicity, at the amelioration of the masses. But though he hated Socialism he could see certain advantages in a co-ordinated and unified State, such as that of Mussolini. For the recognized government had a social end. It was the means to the ordered unity of nations. *The success and victory of Britain should mean the welfare of the world.*

And besides Fascism faced another fact: it was the fact that the political question had become economic; and elections were the verdict of the electorate in any government's struggle with the economic problem, and for dealing with the economic problem, Churchill had found parliament was vain. Adult suffrage, he insisted, could not possibly 'arrive at the right decisions upon modern business and finance'.²

By 1925 the world had seen the end of *laissez-faire*. Adam Smith had been outrun; and England's welfare must be determined by new principles. But what principles? A great thinker, technical, dispassioned, might find them; but not a general election. The mind, says Burke, is brought far more easily to acquiesce in the proceedings of one man or a few who act under a general procuration for the State than in the vote of a victorious majority.³

The problem was to find the means by which to deal with the new problem: the curse of plenty. That problem needed a separate organization. Mr. Churchill was convinced that it

¹ See page 72.

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 232.

³ 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs', *Works* (1826), VI, p. 212.

needed the authority of skilled thinkers, independent of votes and party.¹

Such were the problems Churchill propounded to Oxford after he left the Treasury.

And if that was true for providing for the household of the nation, it was true of her relations with her neighbours. *For in a world living by interdependence foreign policy and economic policy are not to be cut in twain.*

The great need of our time is for parties to combine to think out a foreign policy in relation to economic needs, and to see that public opinion is thoroughly informed as to the issues. The troubles of to-day are due to a diplomacy in fetters. For neither parliament nor public opinion paid due attention to the problems propounded by Mr. Churchill.

¹ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 239.

CHAPTER 11

The Master of Style

With such problems maturing in his mind, it was well that for the next ten years Mr. Churchill held no office in a parliamentary system. He kept firm hold of his seat in Parliament at Epping. And he developed his career in three aspects: as a writer of classic power, as a journalist, and as an independent Conservative Member of Parliament able by the weight of his power to turn a debate for or against the Government. He used that power in relation to the dominant movements of the years: the failure of the MacDonald Government to cope with the problems of 'the economic blizzard', as the repercussion of the American slump was called, and what arose out of that, the question of equilibrium in Europe. In all these, he consistently expended and developed the tempestuous energy of his moderating influence, until when the war came ten years later it was imperative to take him back into the Government as First Lord of the Admiralty, and as the stress of adversity told on the unity of the country, to make him Prime Minister. The foundation for this resurrection of his political power is his literary work. By his journalism he reached vast numbers; by his books, he impressed the most acute and distinguished minds.

His talents and genius had now at the age of fifty-five attained to perfect ripeness, and he gave them to two personal subjects. Of these the first—to put it simply—was himself: this work was, as Lord Balfour had suggested, autobiography disguised as contemporary history, work which had with the help of secretaries been done in five volumes of *The World Crisis*, before he gave up the Exchequer. He followed it by direct reminiscences, not less brilliant but in a lighter vein—*My Early Life*. He completed this in the course of years with *Thoughts and Adventures* and *Great Contemporaries*. All these then are simply elaborations of one great theme: ‘The Life and Times of Winston Churchill’. He never tired of the sensation of being himself. Why should he? His own experiences were a perennial treasury. But he varied this with four impressive volumes on the founder of his house, the first Duke of Marlborough, a book which aims at dealing with historic scandals, and making glory solid.

What then is the quality of his work as a writer? What do we see in this self-portrait so wonderfully painted against a wide and interesting background in a large and brilliant group? For his work in its arrangement and in its bright points of colour, in its flash and splendour alike of circumstance and vitality, and in the fiery intelligence of the eyes all remind one of the court groups of Goya in the Prado at Madrid. What is the philosophy of the history he has written about other times or his own?

The opening of *The World Crisis* does not attain the literary excellence of *The Malakand Field Force*, *The River War* or

Lord Randolph Churchill. At that time he did indeed *write*. His pen, that is to say, was in his hand and the task of arranging, creating, perfecting, polishing was long. Each therefore is a masterpiece in style and *ordonnance*. Each is cast in the classic mould. If Macaulay was a model for the earlier histories, Morley was so for the biography of Lord Randolph, and once again the young scholar ran before his ageing teacher. But now a change had taken place. Churchill had used his pen for countless minutes of Government, minutes in which the sense of style would have been out of place. The artist's passion for perfection was no longer the first habit of his management of words; on the contrary he was using them for business, and a laborious business, for relating taxation to the profits of commerce and industry. But even before that, whether at the Board of Trade, at the Home Office or the Admiralty, he had been incessantly preoccupied with the mechanism of technicalities, with what Burke calls 'vulgar, trite and transitory events'. He had obscured his sense of the dignity and dance of words: he had forfeited the instinct for beautiful patterns so as to attain in State papers or in Parliament the effects he then required. But, even so, he kept his taste for eloquence. Here he had long admired the examples of imagery, or raciness, of dramatic pungency and humour in the speeches of Mr. Lloyd George. He aimed at investing his parliamentary speeches with a sense of grandeur; he threw upon the government of England not merely the light of a high critical experience but of a statesman's imagination building finely for a high social purpose, and finding his imagery in the noblest things of nature and of history.

Nevertheless, it was a habit less of formal literature, more of common speech. It was addressed to men who had less and less taste for the grand style. It was not merely artistic but vivacious and witty; it could take its simile from the card table, it was marked with the temper of cabinet government,

'with many amenities in an atmosphere of courtesy, friendliness and goodwill';¹ and at the same time, though rancour and animosity were rare, there darts in from time to time the sharpness and clash of personal fight. Churchill in his time had had quarrels with almost all his great contemporaries in politics. None had followed him at every turn, none had found him perfect. He had driven his favourite ideas too hard; he had kept balance where others, like Lloyd George, had run into bad excesses; and since he surveyed history from his own part in it, since his own chimney was his golden milestone in the affairs of the world, he is constantly varying his appreciation of the march of events with a reference to his own views, or his own part.² The reader has the constant stimulus of moving backwards and forwards between biography and a story of persons and events. Occasionally the interest in them is apart from their immediate relation to the writer: at such times, he comes nearest to the narrative excellence of his three early masterpieces.

But at all times one is aware that the work has become hurried: both by the vast scale over which it passes; and by the fact that this is not the leisured product of literary genius, but is dictated and worked out by secretaries, while the master who had supplied the first impulse also gives the finishing touch. For much of this work on *The World Crisis* is not entirely Winston Churchill: it is the school of Winston Churchill. If that is true of *The World Crisis*, it is still more true of the *Marlborough*, where competent historians, of whom Mr. Keith Feiling was the chief, were called in as coadjutors under the supreme director and commander who marshalled the whole work, and finally set on every detail his seal.

The chief attractions of *The World Crisis* are its personal

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 37.

² Cf. 'I come down to the personal thread on which this narrative of large events is strung.' *Aftermath*, p. 422.

touches: the sense of drama both in the tragedy of the Dardanelles, and in the danger and recovery in the West; and not least in his personal sketches. Of Joffre, Mangin, Foch, we have already glimpsed his portraiture, but perhaps the most elaborate and excellent portrayal is that of Lenin in *The Aftermath*.

'It was with a sense of awe that they [the Germans] hurried upon Russia the most grisly of all weapons. They transported Lenin in a sealed truck, like a plague bacillus, from Switzerland into Russia. Lenin arrived at Petrograd on April 16 [1917]. Who was this being in whom there resided these dire potentialities? Lenin was to Karl Marx what Omar was to Mahomet. He translated faith into acts. He devised the practical methods by which the Marxian theories could be applied in his own time. He invented the Communist plan of campaign. He issued the orders, he prescribed the watchwords, he gave the signal and he led the attack.

'Lenin was also Vengeance. Created by the bureaucracy, by birth a petty noble, reared by a locally much respected Government School Inspector, his early ideas turned by not unusual contradiction through pity to revolt, extinguishing pity. Lenin had an unimpeachable father and a rebellious elder brother. This dearly loved companion meddled in assassinations. He was hanged in 1894. Lenin was then sixteen. He was at the age to feel. His mind was a remarkable instrument. When its light shone, it revealed the whole world, its history, its sorrows, its stupidities, its shames and above all its wrongs. It revealed all facts in its focus—the most unwelcome, the most inspiring—with an equal ray. The intellect was capacious and in some phases superb. It was capable of universal comprehension in degree rarely reached among men. The execution of the elder brother deflected the broad white light through a prism—and the prism was red.

'But the mind of Lenin was used and driven by a will no

less exceptional. His body, though spare and vigorous in spite of disease, was well fitted to harbour till middle age these incandescent agencies. Before they burnt it out his work was done, and a thousand years will not forget it.

‘Implacable vengeance rising from a frozen pity in a tranquil, matter-of-fact, good-humoured integument. His sympathies cold and wide as the Arctic Ocean, his hatreds tight as the hangman’s noose. His purpose to save the world: his method to blow it up. Absolute principles but readiness to change them. Apt at once to kill or learn, dooms and afterthoughts, ruffianism and philanthropy. But a good husband, a gentle guest, happy, his biographer assures us, to wash up the dishes or dandle a baby, as mildly amused to stalk a capercailzie as to butcher an Emperor.

‘Lenin was the Grand Repudiator. He repudiated everything. He repudiated God, King, Country, morals, treaties, debts, rents, interest, the laws and customs of centuries, all contracts, written or implied, the whole structure, such as it was, of human society. In the end, he repudiated himself, he repudiated the Communist system.

‘The walls of the Kremlin were not the only witnesses of a strange decay. It was reported that for several months before his death he mumbled old prayers with a ceaseless iteration. If it be true, it shows that irony is not unknown on Mount Olympus. But this gibbering creature was no longer Lenin. He had already gone. His body lingered for a space to mock his vanished soul. It is still preserved in pickle for the curiosity of the Moscow public and for the consolation of the faithful.

‘Lenin’s intellect failed at the moment when its destructive force was exhausted, and riper sovereign remedial functions were its guest. He alone could have led Russia into the enchanted quagmire, he alone could have found the way back to the causeway. He saw: he turned: he perished. The strong illuminant that guided him was cut off at the moment he had

turned resolutely for home. The Russian people were left floundering in the bog. Their worst misfortune was his birth: their next worst—his death.'

Such then is the fullest portrait in Churchill's histories. It shows all that he had learnt from Gibbon and Macaulay: his own enterprise in management of effect; his irony; his antithesis; his creative power; his capacity to free the imagination; his choice of the dignified and, at times, the startling word; his apt and telling similes; his zest in shocking and amusing people. One could compare with this his ironies on Wilson, or Lloyd George, on the eve of his fall.

'The forces that sustained the Coalition were swiftly decomposing: he had been flouted and defied by officials of the Conservative organization: his own followers were cut off from their roots and lived politically like cut flowers in a vase. In the fierce duress of the war he had run through all the parties and many of the friendships. But he was still—and none could strip him of his fame—"the pilot who had weathered the storm", he was still the great Lloyd George, the best-known human being in the cottages of Britain.'

With this we may compare a phrase on Savinkov: 'He was the essence of good sense expressed in terms of nitroglycerine.'

For narrative, perhaps, he almost excelled the irony of Gibbon in this passage:

'On October 2, 1920, King Alexander, walking in his garden accompanied by his spaniel, paused to watch the antics of a pair of monkeys comprised among the less disciplined pets of the royal palace. The spaniel attacked the female monkey, and the male in retaliation attacked the King. It bit him in the leg. The wound, though particularly painful, was not judged serious by the physicians. But the bite festered and after three weeks of agony King Alexander expired in the arms of the bride who might soon have become his Consort.

'We have already seen how the escape of a single capital

ship, the *Goeben*, spread measureless desolation through the south-east of Europe and through Asia Minor. It is perhaps no exaggeration to remark that a quarter of million persons died of this monkey's bite.'

Let us take finally from *The Eastern Front* his description of mobilization for the Great War:

'All had been worked out to the minutest detail. They involved the marshalling for immediate battle of nearly twelve million men. For each of these was a place reserved. For each there was a summons by name. The depots from which he would draw his uniform and weapons, the time-tables of the railways by which he would travel, the roads by which he would march, the proclamations which would inflame or inspire him, the food and munitions he would require, the hospitals which would receive his torn or shattered body—all were ready. Only his grave was lacking: but graves do not take long to dig. We know no spectacle more instinct with pathos than these twelve million men, busy with cares, hopes and joys of daily life, working in their fields or mills, or seated these summer evenings by their cottage doors with their wives and children about them, making their simple plans for thrift or festival, unconscious of the fate which now drew near, and which would exact from them their all. . . .

'A prodigious event had happened. The monotony of toil and the daily round was suddenly broken. Everything was strange and new. War aroused the primitive instincts of races born for strife. Adventure beckoned to her children. A larger, nobler life seemed to be about to open upon the world. But it was in fact only Death.'

¹

This passage illustrates the style of Winston Churchill at its simplest and his philosophy of the history he had surveyed. All his life his imagination had been busy with the lives of men as they are woven into nations, and through war into the

¹ *Eastern Front*, p. 98.

clash of nations, and finally into peace, or, if not peace, 'The period of exhaustion which was described as peace'.¹ That was his theme against the background of Britain and with a deep instinct for her welfare—in some relation to his own.

But passion and sublimity are readily varied with the jest; and his favourite way of appealing to our sense of fun is his metaphors from the world of animals.

'Two months ago I reminded the House of Commons that after a boa-constrictor had devoured a goat or a deer it usually slept the sleep of repletion for several months. It may, however, happen that this agreeable process is disturbed by indigestion. If the prey has not been sufficiently crushed or covered with slime beforehand, especially if it had been swallowed horns and all, very violent spasms, accompanied by writhings and contortions, retchings and gaspings, are suffered by the great snake. These purely general zoological observations, of which further details can be found in Buffon's *Natural History*, suggest a parallel—no doubt very remote—to what has happened since Austria was incorporated in the German Reich.² But the metaphor of the boa-constrictor could also serve for Britain's parliamentary adaptability: her constitutional boa-constrictor, which has already devoured and absorbed the donkeys of so many generations, only requires reasonable time to convert to its own nourishment and advantage almost any number of rabbits. And similarly the House of Commons tames, calms, instructs, reconciles and rallies to the fundamental institutions of the State all sorts and conditions of men; and even women! But these latter dainty morsels are not always so tender as one might suppose'.³

In repartee he could be crisper. Told that there was in 1910 a leakage of Cabinet secrets, he said: 'It's a Welsh leak'.⁴

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 454.

² *Step by Step*, p. 259.

³ *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 232.

⁴ Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside*.

But most of the Churchill jokes are too good for quotation: they are an atmosphere of genial cynicism, a ripe tolerant amusement at the incongruity of things rather than the sudden antics of wit which can be photographed, and brought out in a collection. His humour glows through whole pages at a time. For a satire, one may well quote his defence of the Duke of Marlborough's thriftiness:

'No mistresses; no actors, no poets, no painters, not even a historian—except the Chaplain, Dr. Hare; no proper following of toadies and hangers-on; no roads blocked with convoys of cooks and comforts—just coarse squalid simplicity—and simplicity basely interested in saving sixpence; simplicity swayed by that shallow thought! Where then is the glory of war? How could any man who fell so far short of the spirit of war in those days hope to win glory? But battles are imperious, contrary things, and one has to reckon with battles.'¹

4

To these six volumes of history threaded on to personal interest, he added, besides his speeches and his articles, two particularly attractive volumes: *Thoughts and Adventures* in 1932, and in 1937 *Great Contemporaries*. Each showed the range of his interest, his verve, and the warmth and justice of his appreciations. He is most happy in his changes from dignity to humour, from sarcasm to sentiment, and singularly broad and bracing in his view of his contemporaries. Among all the enmities of politics, he shows no trace of bitterness, keeps through all high judgement, always interchangeable with pungency and fun. 'I must say I like bright colours.'² That is one of the perennial and pervading characteristics. Two favourite words are typical: gleaming and glinting. The

¹ *Marlborough*, 1, p. 472.

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 313.

lines are boldly drawn; the colour is high: the effect is picturesque. When he saw the knight advance,

*
*The helmet and the helmet feather
Burned in one burning flame together.*

He combines the strong sculptural work of Houdon with the high vitality of Goya: and though he is busy with great men, it is possible that none he studied is greater than himself. This at least is true of his portraits: that nothing mean finds a place in his gallery. Humour, geniality, an easy and marked amplitude, a power to convey the atmosphere of goodwill in greatness of place, dignity, vividness, experience, proportion, relativity, arrangement—these are the characters of the literary manner of Winston Churchill: these rather than theory, finesse, passion, music or beauty. In his pages, Macaulay and Gibbon seem to return, endowed with elasticity as talkers with all the genial graces of large entertaining, affable even when they are most authoritative. A long procession of memorable people, a succession of startling events live and move before the sympathy and splendour of his eyes. Wherever his glance rests, men come to life and at his approach live more abundantly. Feeling, imagination, sympathy, and above all zest adorn everything he touches with the movement and significance, the sparkle and colour of adventure. On every page he is still the Hussar: his pages have the march and speed, the flash and thud, the rumble and crash of a cavalry display with its traditional gaiety of lance and pennant. Although he saw great work end vainly, what might lead to cynicism or at least disillusionment leaves with him sympathy, combined with a sober and resurgent hope. But the bold confidence of youth has gone, question has taken its place, and there is no more clangour from the drums.

Is there with this zest in the technique of style, a philosophy of history? Is there a piercing and prophetic gift to point direction in a distracted age? The voice of Winston Churchill has been wiser and juster than that of any English statesman of his time: but there are views and interests to which the eyes of all alike have been closed. He saw and has expressed with singular boldness the failure of the causes for which the war was fought.

'The shadow of victory is disillusion. The reaction from extreme effort is prostration. The aftermath of successful war is long and bitter. The years that followed the Great War, and such peace as the infuriated democracies would allow their statesmen to make, were years of turbulence and depression. Shrill voices, unheard amidst the cannonade and the hum of national exertion, were now the louder notes. Subversive processes, arrested by the danger, resumed their course. Weak peoples protected by the shield of Britain from conquest or invasion used their nursed-up and hoarded strength against their guardians. . . . The main feature of our domestic politics since the war has been the devouring of the Liberal Party by the Socialists, and the presentation as an alternative Government by this powerful but strangely assorted force with their dissolvent theories, with their dream of a civilization fundamentally different from the only one we have been able to evolve by centuries of trial and error.'¹

To that subject Mr. Churchill returns again and again, but there are certain subjects which he does not relate and the most significant things in histories, as in testimonials, are what they omit to mention. In the historic field there was no mention of the attempt of the Empress Zita and her husband

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 326.

to make peace. In the political world there was no mention of the Church or the Papacy which, with such exact precision, foretold the dangers of victory. In the economic world, there was no mention of dangers from America; nor is there any account of the peculiar phenomena of the contemporary age: on the one hand the rise of the lower classes all over the world; on the other hand, of the national organization of the productive resources of a country.

'It is of high importance', wrote Mr. Churchill in 1929, 'for those who wish to understand what actually happened that the economic and general aspects of the Treaty of Versailles should be kept entirely separate.'¹ Writing ten years later, would he not add that as time went further, it was seen that the economic and general aspects of the Treaty were indissolubly connected, and that this connection brought to the world its return of disaster? In Mr. Churchill's mind the thought that was uppermost was reparations, which had been proved absurd, but with these alas! went actually an economic arrangement of the Danube which proved just as dangerous and provocative. When Mr. Churchill wrote in *The Eastern Front* he expressed himself with a noble sense of justice for the Austrians; of the statue which the Serbs had raised to the murderer Prinzip, he said this monument 'records his infamy and their own'.²

But when he wrote, he had not at hand the documents since made available by Dr. Gooch showing that the Russians who had rushed on Servia had marched out to battle in the name of prestige,³ while Austria had legitimate claims of defence, nor had he expressed any word of the whole Danubian economy which, centred as it was on Vienna, had produced a happy balance of supplies in the household of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but, owing to the intrigues at the Congress of Berlin,

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 56.

² *Eastern Front*, p. 64.

³ Gooch, *Before the War*, II, p. 390, 391.

had left the lower Danube as a plaything between the rival forces of Pan-Germans and Pan-Slavs. As long as the Danube was in disorder, there were already within the constitution of Europe diseased glands; the disease of one organ, if severe enough, is always liable to vitiate, to poison and to destroy a whole body. Such were the troubles of Europe in the years after Mr. Churchill went out of office, and since neither sermon nor philosophy interrupted his narrative, he hardly attempted to diagnose them. He relates neither the faults nor virtues of the older monarchies, nor analyses the theoretical innovations which have replaced them. All he tells us is of persons and what happened to them, and it is left to taste and culture to show what the writer felt to be true. For him the secret of history is that

*Visions of the past
Sustain the heart in feeling
Life as she is.*

But the years had not yet given the full significance or secret of the scene.

6

“The economic and general aspects of the Treaty of Versailles should be kept entirely separate!” But what were the economic aspects of the Treaty of Versailles? They were not merely that pressing for reparations from Germany which were absurd; but, combining as they did the Treaty of Trianon, they were the economic disruption of the whole Danubian area, penetrating as it does into Germany. The Danube taking its rise in Bavaria completed its system in the economy of the Reich, reaching to the Rhine and in Bohemia to the Elbe. It could not be organized except in vital relation to Germany, either balanced against it as in the case of the Hapsburg

Empire, or else in recognized subservience. According to the Treaties made after 1918, it was neither.

The damage of this mistake was particularly obvious in the case of Austria, whose capital, Vienna, with her 2,000,000 inhabitants, was now cut off by frontiers within an hour's travel. And here in Austria the bond of the economic to the political was particularly manifest and vital. These millions of Austrians had developed through centuries of history a particular role: to give to the whole Hapsburg Empire the tone and flavour of the Holy Roman Empire, which combined the imperial universality of the Christian tradition with those particular virtues of regularity and regimen, of honesty and cleanliness, of kindliness and home, which are the heritage of the German-speaking peoples.

This excellent tradition went everywhere hand in hand with the economic development. To divorce these two historic traditions in favour of Slavonic or Hungarian separatisms, which had of government neither the native gift nor the acquired experience, when in civilization they were far behind the people of Vienna, such was the political counterpart of the economic disruption of Versailles. None of these countries could be secure or happy, but the general restlessness and suffering were particularly acute among the two dethroned peoples, the Hungarians and the Austrians. As for the injustices resulting from the new frontiers, Mr. Churchill was well aware of them.

There is, however, still one capital point which he omits to mention. It is connected with a word of which these countries were particularly fond, the word *ethnic*. The Slav races, the Hungarian race, the Roumanian race must all be left distinct. Why? Geographically and economically the notion was fantastic. These races in area after area, in business ramified with business, were intertwined. But even that was not the root of the difficulty. *If race was the dominant thing, then the whole*

arrangement of Versailles was nonsense from beginning to end; because the German race was the dominant one in Europe. On this principle it could claim unity. Six million Germans in Austria, three and a half million Germans in Bohemia, two million Germans in Poland and Lithuania, two million Germans in Switzerland, Germans in Schleswig-Holstein, and men of strongly German race in the Low Countries, men with German connection in Scandinavia could claim the benefit of the principle. Once admit this, Pan-Germanism reigned supreme in Europe, and was a menace to the world.

Yet these elementary considerations were studiously obscured from the peoples of France and England. Mr. Churchill, who lifted many veils, left this untouched, though behind it were all the combined dangers of political and economic confusion and misery left by the Treaty of Versailles. His instincts are true and just: but he never directed the searchlight of his genius on to the details of the trouble. Had he done so, he must have confessed even more openly than he has done that the last two years of the war had been a failure. A constructive and negotiated peace between the great powers of Europe, a peace which left American democracy in the background and replaced it by the realities of life and maintenance which had framed the noble household of Europe, a peace made before the corrupting and destructive monotones of Bolshevism had rooted themselves in Russia: this was what was required: this was what the Pope and the Hapsburgs had urged—and by whom, by whom *particularly* was it refused?

7

Although Mr. Churchill never mentions the existence of a Church, he pays respect again and again to the sagacity inherent in the crowns and thrones of Europe. He pays noble tribute to King George V, he writes with acumen about the

Emperor William, he has a high regard for the Emperor Franz Josef, he appreciated the fine gifts of King Alfonso. He also mentions the existence in France of an anti-religious faction, particularly active in the case of Clemenceau and Sarraïl.¹ But the enmity between these conservative powers in monarchy, close related to the conservative powers in the Church, between these and the forces around Sarraïl and Clemenceau—this Mr. Churchill has never closely examined. Few Englishmen have. Yet from time to time his friends have invited his attention in that direction. Colonel Repington, of whom he saw so much during the war, who was so welcome in his mother's house, suggests, in a book which Mr. Churchill knows, that when the Austrians pressed the proposals for peace they were prevented by that anti-clerical society.² Colonel Repington made very definite references to the ability and the wisdom of Vatican diplomacy, and the excellence of its information.³ Now the Vatican has never veiled its hostility to a secret society extremely powerful not only in the case of Clemenceau and Sarraïl, but among the parliamentary chiefs in Italy, which among other revolutionary aims had planned the disruption of the Austro-Hungarian Empire along the very lines which the victors of Versailles carried out. That plan was completed in 1918 and 1919. A document exists which shows that that very plan was already mature in 1858.⁴

Such considerations did not escape Mr. Churchill's mind

¹ Whatever dispute there might be about his military achievements, his irreligious convictions were above suspicion. There appeared to be an understanding in French governing circles that he was to be assigned an important independent role in the East which would give him the opportunity of gathering the military laurels from which the French Radical Socialist elements were determined anti-clerical generals should not be debarred *World Crisis*, p. 505.

² Repington, *First World War*, II, pp. 210, 212, 382.

³ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 438-42.

⁴ A. Pingaud, *Un Projet d'Alliance Franco-Russe* (Paris, 1932), based on Archives du Quai d'Orsay.

when in 1936 and 1937 he reviewed the high adventure and the far-reaching complications of the Spanish Civil War. His son spent much time at Salamanca and Burgos as a War Correspondent. His son knew the whole case of France against the Bolsheviks, who worked with Freemasons of the Grand Orient through the Popular Front, as it was called. He knew that the Popular Front was organized against those two dictators who at that time were vehement against Bolshevism, and who, not without success, had attempted to sweep the secret society of Freemasons out of their country. Between Mr. Churchill and his son Randolph the closest sympathy has always existed.

When those great questions arose, Mr. Churchill, though he made very searching remarks, sometimes in a light, sometimes in the most serious vein, confined himself to more obvious and familiar subjects, and these he treated with that largeness and firmness, combined with acumen, which marked his political work from the beginning onwards. But that, though avoiding sensation, he is perfectly aware of the connection between Bolshevism and the Popular Front, he has stated in precise and arresting terms in the sharpest essay in irony which he has allowed himself, his essay on *Trotsky*, *alias Bronstein*. He there displays in its full iniquity the Russian horror, whether directed by Lenin, by Trotsky himself, or by Stalin; these are the words in which he relates how Stalin replaced Trotsky:

‘All his scheming, all his daring, all his writing, all his harangues, all his atrocities, all his achievements, have led only to this—that another “comrade”, his subordinate in revolutionary rank, his inferior in wit, though not perhaps in crime, rules in his stead, while he, the once triumphant Trotsky, whose power meted death to thousands, sits disconsolate—a skin of malice stranded for a time on the shores of the Black Sea, and now washed up in the Gulf of Mexico.’¹

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 197.

• Mr. Churchill then proceeds to explain the connection between Communism and the Popular Front:

‘At first the time-honoured principles of Liberalism and democracy are invoked to shelter the infant organism. Free Speech, the right of public meetings, every form of lawful political agitation and constitutional right are paraded and asserted. *Alliance is sought with every popular movement towards the Left.*

‘*The creation of a mild liberal or socialist government in some period of convulsion is the first milestone.* But no sooner has this been created than it is overthrown. Woes and scarcity resulting from confusion must be exploited. Collisions, if possible attended with bloodshed, are to be arranged between the New Government and the working people. Martyrs are to be manufactured. An apologetic attitude in the rulers should be turned to profit. Pacific propaganda may be made in the guise of hatreds never before manifested among men. No faith need be, indeed may be, kept with non-communists. Every act of goodwill, of tolerance, of conciliation, of mercy, of magnanimity on the part of governments or statesmen is to be utilized for their ruin. Then when the time is ripe and the moment opportune, every form of lethal violence from mob revolt to private assassination must be used without stint or compunction. The citadel will be stormed under the banners of Liberty and Democracy, and once the apparatus of power is in the hands of the Brotherhood, all opposition, all contrary opinions must be extinguished by death. Democracy is but a tool to be used and afterwards broken; liberty but a sentimental folly unworthy of the logician. . . .

‘I wrote this passage nearly seven years ago; but is it not an exact account of the Communist plot which has plunged Spain into the present hideous welter against the desires of the overwhelming majority of Spaniards on both sides?’¹

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 199.

So wrote Mr. Churchill in 1937. But when it comes to revealing these things in the light of day and tracing their connection with the monarchies he admires, or with the Bolshevism he abhors, Mr. Churchill was compelled to stay his hand. He judged it hardly wise 'so far' to startle the British public with revelations. There are some things better suggested than announced. He always likes bright colours, but there are some lights so glaring, some shadows so dark, that they would disturb the arrangement of his whole canvas. Such lights, such shadows as those which would suggest that his political friends in Britain were if not friendly, at least not hostile, to those continental forces of disorder which were responsible for the murder of so many Russians, so many Hungarians, so many Spaniards, and had such close relations with the popular fronts with which Mr. Eden allied himself. It was beyond Mr. Churchill's dignity to mention these. But we must not therefore conclude that he was ignorant of the trend of so powerful a current in contemporary history.

In the final portrait of *Great Contemporaries*, that of President Roosevelt—he shows how much his mind had awoken to the considerations of a changing economy which he had omitted to state in his budget speeches from 1925 to 1929. This essay was written in 1934. In it he faces the two problems of credit and production: but although he states with surpassing brilliance the questions involved, he does not revert to any mention of the planned economies of Europe, of the effect of America on world trade, or of any organization of credit based on production rather than on gold. What he does state is the function of the capitalist to take risks, to launch enterprise and carry it through, to raise values, and to expand credit. The work of the capitalist is to enrich numbers of the people by making real what he imagines. Destroy the system of capital and credit and you cut men off from their immediate fortune. But in any case, asked Mr. Churchill, why cripple and

kill capitalism till you are sure you have found a means to take its place? Leave the old ship to sink if you like: take to the rafts and listen to the shouts of those who say that the eldorado of communism is near; but is one so sure that it is near? 'The Siberian coast is rugged and black, and there are long cruel frosts in the Arctic Ocean. The real question is really other than these: are you going to succeed if you discard that system of property, freedom and enterprise which made the English-speaking world so rich? Life will always be a struggle. Which is better: to be all equal because all are poor: or to secure through variety and inequality a higher standard for all: to have well-being at the price of inequality?'¹

In the discussion of America, Mr. Churchill again omits reference to any system of ethics, to any agency of the spirit. He shows no interest in the fact that Europe's long endowment of wealth had any relation to a lofty culture, or any foundation in a Church. Nor does he say anything about the immigration laws, which, combined with contraception, arrested the process of development. He does refer in another place to the pabulum given to Germany by American loans: he leaves us to imagine what happened when those loans ceased. For it was the sudden strain of sharpened hunger on a still unsettled Germany which gave a new attraction to the evangel of Hitler and made him paramount in 1933. From that time Mr. Churchill's main preoccupation has been with the resultant problem. Pétain, it appears, had been right after all. Germany had been rearming from the beginning; but she was now under the control of a man of genius who, in ruthlessness, in unscrupulousness, in cunning and in revenge had in pursuit of his ambition of a Bolshevized and powerful Germany little to learn from Lenin, and who combined his economic system with his foreign policy without any distraction of a vote from uninformed masses.

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 380.

CHAPTER 12

The Mentor of Demos

If we wonder why Mr. Churchill did not return to politics after the collapse of the Baldwin administration in 1929, we have only to consider how vague and ineffective the MacDonald Government was in the matter of foreign policy. Russia was ruthlessly pursuing the ruin of Europe through revolution. The secret rearmament of Germany was already going forward by leaps and bounds. For long years, as the French always insisted, German officers had been attempting to rebuild the mighty force that had been shattered. In remote forests and on solitary plains, resolute officers kept their forces together and made their preparations. Things had now gone much further. An army was thinly disguised as a constabulary; under the excuse of civil aviation, a huge air force was built; German youth were encouraged to take their sport in the air. The factories of Germany were so organized that at a moment they could be turned from chemicals to munitions, from machinery to cannon. These preparations, wrote Churchill, 'though assiduously concealed, were nevertheless known to the intelligence departments of France and Great Britain. But nowhere in either of these governments was there the commanding power, either to call Germany to a halt, or to endeavour to revise the treaties, or better still both. The first course would have been quite safe and easy, at any rate until the end

of 1931; but at that time Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues were still contenting themselves with high-sounding platitudes upon the blessings of peace, and gaining the applause of well-meaning but ill-informed majorities throughout our island. Even as late as 1932, the greatest pressure was put by the British Government upon France to reduce her armed strength when at the same time the French knew that immense preparations were going forward in all parts of Germany. I explained the follies of this process repeatedly and in detail in the House of Commons.¹

This arresting passage leads one to the new phase of Mr. Churchill's career: to the phase that in the popular mind rapidly obscured his constructive plans for Europe and the warnings he had persistently shouted against Bolshevism. The development of this phase has never been illogical: on the contrary, the process of argument is simplicity itself. If no measures are taken either to come to terms with Germany, or to control her in time, she will become more dangerous than before, and Western Europe therefore can expect a return for all the misery that the democracies themselves inflicted on Germany and her allies. Every patriotic instinct in Churchill's mind, every inclination towards combat, every impulse of perversity inherent in childhood in his generous nature, every word from the voice of the first Duke of Marlborough, every habit formed in his early career as a cavalryman, every conviction that had inspired him at the Admiralty or till the end of the war combined to lead him to one conviction: the cause of Britain must be maintained.

His patriotism took the most logical and most cogent form. The truths he spoke in the succeeding years were one of the few voices of sanity which re-echo—now both to upbraid lethargy and to instruct the foolishness of Europe. His new

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 264. Cf. *Arms and the Covenant*, pp. 284, 285.

pastime, bricklaying, is an index to what his political thought was doing for us.

2

This combination of fundamental instincts in the high surge of the blood was soon reinforced by the leaders of the parties in Britain and in Germany. Who was it that for five years of disastrous inaction was Prime Minister in London? Ramsay MacDonald had no claims on Churchill's sympathy.

'I remember when I was a child,' said Churchill on the 28th of January 1931, 'being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus, which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit in the programme which I most desired to see was the one described as "The Boneless Wonder". My parents judged that spectacle would be too revolting and demoralizing for my youthful eyes, and I have waited fifty years to see the Boneless Wonder.'¹ During his whole career as Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald neither conciliated Germany nor restrained her; and Mr. Churchill was anything but pleased that his former chief, Lord Baldwin, should be so closely associated with this policy.

Ramsay MacDonald came into power at the same time as another Socialist President over the Cabinet in Paris. This was of course Herriot. The governments of the democracies of France and England therefore were both unwilling to conciliate Germany, arm against her, or to repudiate Russia.

3

Meanwhile noticeable and disquieting men were tightening their grip on Germany. As the aged Hindenburg approached

¹ Hansard, 29 January 1931.

² For an account of Churchill's suspicions of Mr. MacDonald and his connection with Bolshevism see his speech at Manchester, 7th of May 1925. Cf. *Step by Step*, pp. 45-9.

his ninetieth year, the party of aggressive officers around him assumed more and more control over his authority. They hurried on the process of rearmament under Bruening, and then Bruening was replaced as Chancellor by officers whom Churchill thoroughly distrusted.¹ These in turn gave way to a man who like Ramsay MacDonald was a Socialist and determined on dethroning the man who had inherited privilege. But whatever else Hitler was, at least he was in his way a hero and certainly a genius. He was a man to whom Churchill from the beginning gave the respect of a thorough scrutiny, and who appeared to sum in significance and power the huge combative force of the German peoples, a force greater, as it seemed to Churchill, than other human records could show: 'For four years', he wrote, 'Germany fought and defied the five continents of the world by land and sea and air. To break their strength and science and curb their fury, it was necessary to bring all the greatest nations of mankind into the field against them. Overwhelming populations, unlimited resources, measureless sacrifice; the Sea Blockade could not prevail for fifty months. Small States were trampled down in the struggle; a mighty Empire was battered into unrecognizable fragments; and nearly twenty million men perished or shed their blood before the sword was wrested from that terrible hand. Surely, Germans, for history it is enough.'²

It was not enough. Each year as it revolved showed that this formidable torrent drew its resources from unquenched fountains in the earth of Prussia. And now its power was incarnated in a man of the people who rose, as Lloyd George had risen, both to incarnate and to direct the spirit of a people. The German people were aroused by a sense of bitter wrong, hardened by humiliation and hunger, coarsened by the break in tradition which swept away the salutary influences of their courts, deprived of the delicacy of respect, but military still,

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 120.

² *World Crisis*, p. 820.

organized still, still German in their discipline, their simplicity, their ruthlessness and their pride. Hitler was borne up to power partly indeed by a carefully organized and unscrupulous plan which had nothing to learn from either Mussolini or Stalin, and stronger than either communism or Fascism because it was German, and being German was both musical and martial, industrious and savage, tractable and aggressive. But this was not the only force that raised him: the other was that resentment against social injustice, that revulsion against unmerited misery which came upon the German youth when, after years of democracy and demoralization, they found themselves starving as a result of speculation in America. And both of these combined with a military recuperation which had already gone far: so that when Hitler came to power he had only to avow openly every latent tendency towards menace which angrily trembled in the great German people. Swiftly and loudly, but never without cunning compromise and soothing deceit, Hitler gave them his new and portentous leadership.

No-one has described this better than Churchill. 'Germany was to recover her place in Europe by re-arming, and the Germans were to be largely freed from the curse of unemployment by being set to work on making the armaments and other military preparations. Thus from the year 1933 onwards the whole available energies of Germany were directed to preparation for war, not only in the factories, in the barracks, and on the aviation grounds, but in the schools, the colleges, and almost in the nursery by every resource of State power and modern propaganda. . . . It was not until 1935 that the first terror of this revelation broke upon a careless and imprudent world and Hitler, casting aside concealment, sprang forward armed to the teeth, with his munition factories roaring night and day, his aeroplane squadrons forming in ceaseless succession, his submarine crews exercising in the Baltic, and his

armed hosts tramping the barrack squares from one end of the broad Reich to the other.¹

4

How then did Mr. Churchill, as now elder statesman, verging on sixty years of age, propose to approach this disquieting complication? Before Hitler arose he spoke, on the 13th of November 1932, in the House of Commons: Remove the grievances. Reopen the questions of Danzig and Transylvania and avoid war while wisdom and skill can still prevent it: but meanwhile thank God for the French Army.

Two months later, Hitler, on the 30th of January 1933, had become Imperial Chancellor of Germany. Churchill's next speech was to argue for an efficient air force such as England at that time was far from possessing. On the 17th of November 1933 he argued for adequate provision for Britain's safety, and at the same time for a collective stand in Europe so that Germany's grievances could be redressed before her rearmament menaced the world. On the 7th of February 1934 he made a practical speech on the co-ordination of the three services, urging that the Navy should have freedom to design the ships required, that the Air Force should be as strong as any in Europe, that factories should be so reorganized, that if required they could be turned at once to purposes of war. In 1914 a Navy was enough: but now an Air Force was as important as a Navy, and the time was running short. He supported this a month later to Mr. Baldwin to give England parity in the air with any Continental power. The following week he protested against the absurd proposal that France should disarm. France disarm in the teeth of the rising German danger! Disarmament could not restrain rearmament. But some said 'rearmament was unthinkable. And now', said Mr. Churchill,

¹ *Great Contemporaries*, p. 266.

'the best we can hope is to regulate the unthinkable. Regulated unthinkable, that is the proposal now, and very soon it will be a question of making up our minds to unregulated unthinkable.'¹

That was Mr. Churchill's conclusion in 1934, and all he could do in support of it was to act strongly with Lord Londonderry to obtain an Air Force: on that subject the two were in complete agreement. You must come to terms with Germany, or you must have adequate defence against her: and if you can, both. It was the same argument that Mr. Churchill pressed in the House of Commons and Lord Londonderry in the Cabinet. But the Cabinet, instead of giving both, gave neither. They temporized; they drifted. The disease which had persistently weakened British foreign policy for seventeen years became more acute. They spoke much and did nothing. And if custom emasculates the threat to a certainty that nothing will result from it, threatening is not enough.

The real trouble was that France and England were no longer in agreement; and that both having now very large electorates were being controlled in moves of nice precision, yet far-reaching effect, by the vote of people who were in no position to push their opinion or sentiments, to the hazard of events. 'All the while Great Britain has drifted along her tortuous, feckless course, the sport of every wind that blows.'² 'Supposing I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm,' Mr. Baldwin asked, very pertinently, 'does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to this cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election more certain.'³ The British people did not want war: yet they pretended that they could manage diplomacy which in the long intercourse of national rivals had always implied the threat of

¹ *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 131.

² *Step by Step*, p. 74.

³ Baldwin in the House of Commons, 12th of November, 1936.

force. The only way to master a situation is, like Pétain, to decide quickly, and act effectively: *voir grand et agir vite*. But speak as Mr. Churchill might in the historic darkness of the House of Commons, he could not by that educate the Commons of England in the hard science and art of diplomacy any more than he could train them in the high, cold, but nourishing Science of economics: his articles would bring him a comfortable addition to a comfortable income by giving to hundreds of thousands a vivid, shrewd, genial and masterly estimate of passing events: so much they did: they could not reinforce the foundations of a tottering palace of nations.

5

That depended rather on a firm tradition of powerful government acting in accord with the principles of justice and wisdom. If indeed Geneva was to inaugurate a system of international accords, if it was to house a functioning society of nations, those nations must decide firmly to adhere to the laws by which nations live: justice must be sacrosanct; law must be supported by sanctions: life must be continuous in a recognized order of unity; above all, there must be due provision for giving men their daily bread. And for all these there must be a sense of sublime authority acknowledged and applied by all. Such Mr. Churchill recognized again and again as the need of Europe: and the promise of Geneva.

Such an institution must be guarded, cherished, honoured above all for what it implied of a law of Europe. But the fine ideal, and the practical reality, by no means coalesced. There were many who not without reason found it difficult to be devout at the shrine of Notre Dame de Genève, set up by Woodrow Wilson. The League of Nations had been too often the intrigue of nations. It was, in all its modes of being, all its devices and workings, too far from that sacred temple of graces

and virtues in which a Christian society grew up on the foundation of the apostles and elders with Christ Himself as its corner stone. What was the foundation on which the Genevan novelty was set but Allied supremacy rocking dangerously on Danubian disorder? It was worth the money paid for it, for it did some small things excellently; but when it came to the big things? Those were either settled by the big nations among themselves, or not settled at all.¹

And in 1935 the whole question of big nations was disturbed in its depths by those abysmal differences among the great powers. France was incensed by a naval agreement between Britain and Germany: in dudgeon she hurried into the arms of Moscow; and Italy, having agreed at Stresa with the Allies as to an attitude towards Germany, went on to revive her claim against a barbaric African country promised to her long ago: she defied the League in order to lay hands on Ethiopia, ruled by a dusky but dignified potentate, who was a Christian, reigning under the name of Haile Selassie—'Power of the Trinity'.

What attitude would Mr. Churchill take in this changed and confused situation? Would he warn M. Barthou and the French of their folly in making love to a boa-constrictor? Would he support the Italians in their claim for a long-promised field of emigration for a population increasing at the rate of half a million a year? Would he welcome the move towards friendship with Germany against Russia as fulfilling his earlier recommendation, and a wish he had patiently fostered?

6

These questions were answered by the march of events beyond Mr. Churchill's choice. He saw in the summer of 1935 a

¹ Grandi, quoted by R. Sencourt, *Italy*, pp. 103, 104.

chief whom he had never entirely trusted assume manifest control of the policy of Britain, and make another subtle compromise with regard to the foreign policy of the country. For as Mr. Churchill acutely noted, Mr. Baldwin put the Foreign Office under the control of two separate Ministers; one its nominal head, the experienced Conservative Sir Samuel Hoare; the other, a silken idealist adored by toilers, Mr. Anthony Eden, an enthusiast for the League of Nations. Now these two could not be in entire agreement: when they failed to agree, the decision was with Mr. Baldwin himself.¹ He had soon to decide between a Foreign Secretary agreeing with the Quai d'Orsay in favour of agreement with Italy at the price she asked, and a League of Nations Minister who supported an institution now altered by the entrance of that scheming oriental power so long denounced by Mr. Churchill as disruptive. In this dilemma, the choice was taken from Mr. Baldwin by the British democracy: in a ballot organized by the League of Nations' Union they decided against Italy. They decided in favour of Abyssinia, which, had they but known it, meant now support for the schemes of both Moscow and Berlin.

Mr. Churchill was far too acute not to see what was happening. A quarrel with Italy when Germany was arming at a prodigious rate could easily mean war, and could not really be entertained: and yet Paris and London were engaged by their democracies to work against Italy. Such was the situation as he saw it moving in 1935. To Eden he quoted Dr. Johnson in the House of Commons. 'Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.'² He went to Sir Samuel Hoare and warned him that France

¹ *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 254. *Step by Step*, p. 21.

² *Arms and the Covenant*, pp. 130, 253.

could not afford to quarrel with Italy.¹ The position of Italy was centred in the strategy of the world's central sea, and the sea which was the path to Britain's petrol and to her trade with Australasia and the East. Some way round must be discovered, and it was discovered. It was the agreement that Italy should have much but not all of what she asked. It was in short the diplomatic plan made known to the world as the Hoare-Laval Agreement, designed to save the Negus of Ethiopia, and defeat the wiles of Moscow and Berlin. It was the only way out of an unpleasant position. But Demos did not know that and refused it. So the Allies lost the support of Italy, which Mr. Churchill had told them was imperative. And quickly the full fatality of the event unfolded in his prophetic sense.²

In 1936 he became aware of still more sinister complications. Russia, intriguing always in the sense of revolution, was working with popular fronts in both Madrid and Paris to prepare a communist move in both countries. When France so felt the weight of this communist intrigue that she could not order a general mobilization, when England was so pledged against Italy that she could not persuade her obstinate people to recoil, a far more grisly enemy advanced. It was now Hitler who seized his opportunity, and made the able pretext of France's treaty with Red Russia to defy Locarno and the law. He marched his armies into the Rhineland and proceeded very shortly to fortify it.

From that moment, he made it impossible for the Allies to exert any real pressure on the questions of Central or Eastern Europe. The Danubian question, with Prague and Poland, must slip out of their hand unless they acted strongly and acted at once. The people of England, preoccupied with themselves, had failed to look direct on the things around them.

¹ *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 297.

² *Step by Step*, pp. 23, 24.

They looked on Europe only as mirrored in their own mist, and amused themselves in weaving blurred designs these gave them. They never saw the beacon fires flare up. There was

*Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry
Of those crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet earth's
chaff must fly.*

Never shows the choice momentous till the moment has gone by.

7

This was the turning point of European history. A swift and informed mind must immediately see with what greedy gulps the resuscitated wolf of German militarism would now devour the trembling lambs of Versailles. Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, the whole Danubian region, Poland, all the objects of her voracity, would all be at her mercy because their one pledge, that of the Rhineland, could no longer be held in the west. The lambs bleated their warnings. Finland also argued. Even Italy suggested approaches, but the people of England neither understood nor cared.

By this time, Sir Samuel Hoare had resigned. Well advised by the permanent chiefs of the Foreign Office, he had seen already in December what was coming. He knew that if a bargain was not made with Mussolini this grim horror was inevitable; he knew that he could not fight for the Negus, and that it would therefore be cruel to encourage him; he believed that Mussolini had claims which could not be wholly ignored.¹ He said that rather than not come to terms with Mussolini he himself must go. Equally clear in his view, M. Laval in Paris had come to the same conclusion. Both Ministers had gone. And other men had taken their place: Delbos in France, and Eden in England.

¹ Martelli, *Italy against the World*, p. 222.

Which policy did Mr. Churchill support? Armed by the corselet of instinct against Russia, shielded by an honest and direct view of Hitler and his Germany, winged with a swift imagination and a fertile mind, practised in the use of lance and rapier of experience, and bearing on his head the helmet of a loyal patriotism, he never doubted when to press an attack. This he could recognize, if few else could, as the moment of decisive battle, and like a commander of cavalry, with lance and trumpet he led his desperate charge, calling on democracy to mount and follow him. The history of Europe hung on their response.

He had two means to arrest attention. One were his syndicated articles in the newspapers; the other were his speeches in the House of Commons: he made full use of both.

In Parliament he pointed to the appalling fact of a foreign policy which had failed. In five years, he said, we have seen the most depressing and alarming change in the outlook of mankind which has ever taken place in so short a period. Five years ago all felt safe; five years ago all were looking forward to peace, to a period in which mankind would rejoice in the treasures which science can spread to all classes if conditions of peace and justice prevail. Five years ago to talk of war would have been regarded not only as a folly and a crime but almost as a sign of lunacy. Look at the difference in our position now. . . . The violation of the Rhineland is serious from the point of view of the menace to which it exposes Holland, Belgium and France . . . it will produce reactions in the European situation. *It will be a barrier across Germany's front door which leaves her free to sally out eastward and southward by the other doors.*¹

That was the last moment. Start a war later, and the widespread agony would begin. The ghastly things of twenty years before, that hideous waste of slaughter on the Somme,

¹ House of Commons, 26th of March 1936.

they would be back, making the smiling landscapes and the spired habitations of Europe into a wilderness of death. Churchill showed how, when on that Friday night, three weeks before, Hitler, against the advice of his generals, ordered his redoubtable troops to march through the 'scrap of paper' to occupy the Rhineland, he set in motion a trend of events which offered nothing less than blessing or cursing for mankind. 'Which fate befalls us rests no longer with him but with the world. . . . The dear desire of all the peoples, not perhaps even excluding a substantial portion of the German people themselves, is to avoid another horrible war in which their lives and homes will be destroyed or ruined, and such civilization as we have been able to achieve reduced to primordial pulp and squalor. Never till now were great communities afforded such ample means of measuring their approaching agony. Never have they seemed less capable of taking effective measures to prevent it. Chattering, busy, sporting, toiling, amused from day to day by headlines, and from night to night by cinemas, they can yet feel themselves slipping, sinking, rolling backward to the age "when earth was void and darkness moved on the face of the waters". Surely it is worth a supreme effort, the laying aside of every impediment, the clear-eyed facing of fundamental facts, the noble acceptance of risks inseparable from heroic endeavours—to control the hideous drift of events and stop calamity upon the threshold. Stop it! Stop it!! Stop it now!!! NOW is the appointed time.'¹

That is what Mr. Churchill wrote. But the British Government could not give a lead because Demos did not understand; and France could not act alone because she could not order a general mobilization on account of the communist disorders, because in a word the Blum Government was intriguing for other things. It was one of those popular fronts which, as Mr. Churchill was soon to repeat, are managed by Russian intrigue.

¹ *Step by Step*, p. 19.

The speech of Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons (and another of the same tenour from Sir Austen Chamberlain) had been practically ignored by what he called an indulgent press.¹

Such a policy as Mr. Churchill advocated would have driven Mr. Eden out of office. Mr. Eden chose another way: it was to invite Germany to join Russia in the Palace of Nations.

And by a fresh effort, to make words work as deeds, the poisoned pit of lost opportunity was obscured for a time by masses of papers. The fact remains that the chance was gone. States could not organize against Germany again. Events hurried relentlessly on when the communists fomented war in Spain, while Hitler prepared his Danubian designs, and developed with Mussolini, now in Spain, now elsewhere, his hard and ruthless drive for domination. Those two powers, supporting as they did the cause against red crime in Spain, succeeded in dividing Europe on any general question of policy, while the Society of Nations was blatantly exposed in its naked decrepitude. Geneva, as we saw, had been a centre less for justice than intrigue.

In March of 1936, as Mr. Churchill warned England, its last chance had come—and gone. The small nations, we repeat, saw the difficulty and were ready to act. Even Russia agreed. Italy was no longer hostile. France could not but understand. All was ready. But public opinion had not been prepared. Diplomacy was in the fetters of ignorance. The people and Government of Britain refused to lift a hand to cut the rope that soon would strangle Europe. 'They preferred to remain fat, opulent, free spoken—and defenceless.'² Mr. Churchill, crying aloud for the rights of law, and the wisdom of Locarno, had trumpeted the truth. But the ears of Demos

¹ *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 306.

² *Ibid.*, p. 336.

were dull and the brain of Demos was soft. From henceforward let men do what they could.

There are two ways to high success in British politics, each suited to divergent trends in the national taste or temper. The one is to face the truth, the other to hide it; the one walks steadily to the welfare of the world, the other lurches between crisis and improvisation; the one is to be always brilliant, the other always banal.

For the time Mr. Churchill's way was kept waiting for its reward, and Britain appeared to have forgotten a scrap of paper called the Treaty of Locarno, on which he and his colleagues had solidly built their hopes eleven years before. The French have reflected that to dishonour that reply in the hope that Mr. Eden could work his will at Geneva with the men of Hitler as well as with those of Stalin was hardly honourable, nor was it even expedient.

CHAPTER 13

Dictators Ride Tigers

It would be a huge mistake to think that the Member for Epping spent his days and nights in solemn adjurations or melancholy foreboding. He was not Cassandra but an independent member of the House of Commons, very well informed, who had spent thirty years in brilliantly advising people how to do their own business better. As a war correspondent, he had given this advice to generals; as a private member, he had done it with Mr. Balfour's Government; as a Minister, he had made a habit of it in the Cabinet; and indeed what was the whole system of parliamentary government but that of bringing in a man from outside to enthuse and stimulate the regular servants of the Crown, civil, naval or whatever they might be. There was an art in doing it, a certain good humour, a certain irony, a certain imaginative elevation, and these with pungency, power and the mastery of detail Mr. Churchill possessed in highest degree. He had become a superb speaker. His sonorous voice, admirably managed, could convey with full effect his changes from sympathy and feeling to energy and enthusiasm, or at times the satire and scorn. Each sentence carried his hearers with him to laughter and pleasure, or to anger, or again to admiration. He played on them like a fiddler on his strings. And to those who had him present before them what additions in the mobility of his features, the warmth of his expression, the feeling and intelli-

gence in his glance. What wealth of life in eyes and voice and feature, what geniality of gesture and expression to enrich the flow and felicity of speech! From Lloyd George he had little left to learn and could add the finish of the patrician. He could adapt himself with swift and graceful ease to the formality of the House of Commons, to the ease of the dinner-table, to the heckling, or applause, or meetings in his constituency, to a speech at a club, or to the journalistic needs of the *Daily Telegraph*. His style could be stretched at a moment's notice in the direction of the august or the popular. But even as an older man, he had with all his dignity a certain readiness for escapade, and he never forgot the age in which he was living.

It was not a highly serious age: it was an age that had replaced dignity by diversion. It was, as he had suggested, the age of the motor bus, the cigarette, the cocktail party, the cinema, the wireless, the bathing pool. He called it 'a febrile and sensational age, so that even a month or two is enough for people to change their views but forget the views and feelings they entertained before'.¹ And his family gave him no opportunity to forget that the calls of duty had ceded to those of distraction. If he was personally immune from restlessness, it was because he had lived all his life among people such as his mother's friends, who combined all the privileges of fashion, wit, sport, wealth, ease and power; it was because he had the tonic of his art and genius, it was because he was frequently visiting in the most delightful houses, among the best people. In these houses, his gifts secured their effect. But he was of course not scintillating continually. He gave the fullest powers of talk to those who by their authority, their wit or their experience could either stimulate him or appreciate him. But at other times he would sit through meals comparatively

¹ *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 277 Cf. *The Thirties* by Malcolm Muggeridge.

quiet, busy with listening, with reflection or with silent appreciation of the cellar and the chef.

2

The taste of the Churchills had seldom been for churches, and their study was but little on the Bible. The society in which Winston Churchill moved had had from the beginning the Asquithian flavour; he crested the successive waves; the quiet, the old-fashioned, the highly traditional people are sometimes very interesting, but it was not an interest shared by a man who searched the countenances of new secrets and hunted the event. Still less was he distracted by '*le dernier cri d'il y a sept ans*'. When he met men of rank and place, it was that official rank which controls the current contingency. As such he had a particular interest, both historic and immediate, in the lives of kings. To each king he considered he was both courtly and sympathetic. If there was one thing he thoroughly understood, it was the art and science of monarchy. He had nothing to learn from *The Apple Cart*. In that he simply found what he had often thought, but not till then expressed. Kings might fall, like the Emperor William and Don Alfonso: or they might continue to the end like King George. In each case Mr. Churchill would give them their due of courtesy, of homage and of interpretation.

And now as history hurried to a decisive crisis in Europe, there was a change upon the throne of England. Mr. Churchill had admired in King George V his quietness, his sobriety, his restraint, his conscientiousness, his prudence; and such were indeed priceless qualities in a constitutional King. Mr. Churchill felt also a personal regard for the new monarch, for he had been Home Secretary when the young Prince was invested with his dignities at Carnarvon; through the years, he had seen him receive the generous wishes of an Empire and an

incomparable training in his encounters with affairs and men in one interesting place after another. But it seemed to many that the kingly honours would weigh heavily on so slight a figure. And if the training gave many advantages, it also led to strain. Official demands flung the Prince from engagement to engagement, and from place to place. They meant a recurring nervous effort; it led to exhaustion, and sometimes to impatience; it invited reactions; it disturbed the steady and tranquillizing habits. The Prince enjoyed neither the society of many fixed friends, nor the solace of a happy marriage, such as had blessed the life of Mr. Churchill himself. Mrs. Simpson had been presented to the Prince some time before he came to the throne. She was a novelty among his subjects. She had travelled much in China and elsewhere, gratifying many curiosities. She knew the world in many aspects, and had the knack of swiftly suiting herself to each. Unpleasant experiences had also come her way, for she had divorced her first husband; the broker whom she afterwards married had also been divorced. Her American accent, her cosmopolitan smartness and wit, her skill in adapting her toilet to the latest dictates of fashion, the changing expression of her mouth and eyes, her wide experience, her readiness for surprises, her marked differences from the traditional standards of the Court—all these no doubt combined to make a new and irresistible impression upon the heir to the most respectable of thrones.

But whatever the nature of her appeal to the Prince, it was swift and overwhelming; he made no secret of his response. Appearances, convention, royalty and obligations counted as chaff in the gale. Openly, and at all times, he displayed his pleasure in the company of the broker's wife from Baltimore.

Such was the complication which King George V had too frequently occasion to deplore before death surrendered his dignities to question and his son.

With a discretion that is peculiar to the English Press, this

narrative was kept out of print: but the upper classes knew, and for the most part resented every detail of the story. Not a word of its sensational phases was unknown to Mr. Churchill. Although himself of blameless and exemplary fidelity to the most charming of women, he had long been inured to the vogue of the divorce court. His own fascinating mother had not disdained to use it. Nor indeed had one of his daughters. The Victorian standards which had irritated Lord Randolph in 1878 had in the course of fifty years been slowly but widely relaxed till they could gall only the sprinkling of surviving Christians. Men's hearts were beating differently. In the Victorian age love had been a passion, as a century before it had been a pleasure. And now, like Lord Hankey's project at Gallipoli, it was a gamble: it was held to be legitimate as play. People now plighted their hearts in much the same mood as they flung their coin on the table at Monte Carlo. So general had this view become, especially among people of position, that it was not unnatural for Mr. Churchill to apply it even to the throne.

How solve the problem? At first Mrs. Simpson had been invited with her husband to dine at Court to meet the Lindberghs and the Baldwins; then she left her husband and set herself up in a separate flat. In the late summer of 1936 she accompanied the King in his yacht down the Adriatic and through the Dardanelles and conversed with Secretaries of State. Together she and her royal admirer visited King George of Greece in Athens, President Atatürk in Istanbul, and then travelled on to Budapest and Vienna. In the autumn she was mentioned in the Court Circular as sojourning at Balmoral.

The next step was taken in an English provincial law court, where Mrs. Simpson obtained a divorce from her husband. Small publicity was given to the action in the English press; but certain American newspapers were so accurate in their reports of every pungent detail of these events, so outspoken

in their conjectures, that this American lady was now freed by the infidelity of a broker to ratify her contract with a king; so widely were these American newspapers being read in Canada and gradually farther into the Empire, that the prudence of English editors could no longer hide the bulk of rumour. The cavalier way in which the King treated his Ministers and officials added a complication to his Government. He would confer with heads of States without consulting them; he made independent declarations; he received new Ambassadors alone. All these were invasions of ministerial prerogative: what would come next? Where would these dangers end?

It would not have been surprising if the Ministers began secretly to ask themselves whether it were not better to be rid of him: and did he himself seem always to care for his crown? How far did he agree with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who inevitably regarded his coronation as a hallowing to a sacred office? The new sovereign, who made no secret of his distaste for the conventions of courts, took still less interest in the stately rites of abbeys and cathedrals, and was he now to be the central figure in a great hieratic act where he would be anointed and blessed for a life of dedicated splendour and marked as one consecrated and apart? In short, the King's devotion to Mrs. Simpson provided both to the emancipated monarch and his embarrassed ministers a not wholly unwelcome way of ending an impossible situation.

It would doubtless be invidious to accuse Mr. Baldwin of insincerity when to the words of the King:

'I am going to marry Mrs. Simpson and I am prepared to go,' Mr. Baldwin answered:

'Sir, this is most grievous news';

yet it was clear that among the people as a whole, Edward VIII was forfeiting confidence more than he divined. Beginning with the people who knew him best (for it was not least marked among his servants) this movement of distrust spread

downwards and outwards in deepening and widening eddies. The prelates asked how far he was aware of his religious responsibilities. 'Some of us wish', said on the 1st of December 1936 Bishop Blunt of Bradford (and the punster added 'bluntly'), 'that he gave more positive signs of his awareness.' Two days later, the King's proposal of marriage to Mrs. Simpson shook the equilibrium of the world.

The question was discussed whether this marriage would make her Queen of England, would drive her lover off the throne, or whether the Government would change the law to make her a wife while preventing her being a queen. The Government refused.

At this juncture Mr. Churchill came forward to plead the good qualities of the King, and beg for time. On Saturday, December the 5th, he issued a long statement to the newspapers, asking the people to delay their decision 'Why cannot time be granted?' he asked. 'Surely if he asks for time to consider the advice of his Ministers, now that at length matters have been brought to this dire culmination, he should not be denied. Howsoever this matter may turn, it is pregnant with calamity and inseparable from inconvenience. But all the evil aspects will be aggravated beyond measure if the utmost chivalry and compassion is not shown, both by Ministers and the British nation, towards a gifted and beloved King torn between private and public obligations of love and duty.' He used a curious expression: 'If a hasty abdication were to be extorted.' The Government resented the implication that they were either harrying or hurrying their distracted Sovereign.¹

Mr. Churchill was acting as advocate for his old friend, while Mrs. Simpson, to avoid unpleasantness, had hurried by secret ways to the French coast and finally to the Riviera. But the task of advocacy was not easy. In the country there was from certain people of the Left, and from one or two news-

¹ *The Times*, 6 December 1936.

papers, a word in praise of the King. In Parliament the opinion was almost unanimous, and though Mr. Churchill spoke there on December the 7th it was against a mighty flood of opinion that made speaking very difficult. He was almost shouted down. 'May I ask my right honourable friend for assurance that no irrevocable step will be taken', he asked, 'before the House has received a full statement upon not only the personal but the constitutional questions involved?' He tried to stress the constitutional question, but uproar almost prevented him from speaking. 'Sit down! Sit down!' roared members from every party alike. The Speaker himself intervened, asking Mr. Churchill to confine his words to a question. Mr. Churchill pressed for his assurance again, till the Speaker again protested. Mr. Baldwin answered that he did not know what the King would decide, and till he knew that, he could not deal with hypothetical questions. *The Times* reported the matter in a headline on its middle page, with the comment that this had been the most striking rebuff in modern parliamentary history.¹

For, by this time, the Government had won their position. The voice of the Empire was decisive. The King, believing his position and his popularity to have been stronger than they really were, had done his best to secure recognition for the woman he wished to marry, he had played with the idea that if enough time were given to form a personal party, he could secure support and make Mrs. Simpson Queen of England. Such a chance was remote indeed. the danger would have been extreme. Little could be gained: all might have been lost. A simple alternative was at hand: it was to let the King abdicate and let a blameless brother, gifted with an admirable wife and—asset equally priceless—two delightful daughters, ascend the vacated throne. If this were done, it would be well it were done quickly. Mr. Churchill had been

¹ *The Times*, 8 December 1936.

asked by his royal friend to make the cow jump over the moon.

All that remained for him was to receive the expression of gratitude for a valiant effort of friendship. On the last day of the reign of Edward VIII, and at the very moment of his abdication, Mr. Churchill was his guest for luncheon at Fort Belvedere; he recalled how as Home Secretary he had stood at the Prince's side at the investiture at Carnarvon; he was still ready to offer sympathy and advice, especially advice about the speech which the Prince was to send out that evening on the air. He kept to the phrase that Mr. Churchill had already voiced about the conflict of appeals within him. 'I have found it impossible to carry the heavy responsibilities and discharge my duties as King as I would wish without the help and support of the woman I love. . . . I have made this, the most serious decision of my life, only upon a single thought—of what would in the end be best for all.'

The King had indeed been grateful that at a time when he was so much alone he could count for help on a Minister who combined with long experience a mastery of words. Tears were in the eyes of both when the King signed a photograph which he handed over as a souvenir to his faithful subject and servant. When indeed Mr. Churchill was leaving in his car, the butler called to him: 'Mr. Churchill, sir, Mr. Churchill, sir!' The car stopped, and the relic which in the emotion of the moment had been forgotten, was again tendered to its owner.

The two friends did not meet for many years, but Mr. Churchill continued a faithful champion. He sharply criticized Mr. Hector Bolitho in an American magazine, where Mr. Bolitho repeated the accepted view.

And who can doubt that it was the warmth of this ancient flame of friendship which decided that when the Duke of Windsor had to abandon France, he should find an honourable refuge in the tropic colony of the Bahamas, and so re-enter

public life gently? Mr. Churchill had found in Parliament, however, that his grateful and impulsive generosity to the Prince had not strengthened his own position in the nation. Once again it was repeated that in judgement he was unsound. But in truth he was simply being loyal to a tradition. Although Charles II was not impeccable, he could always trust the loyalty of Sir Winston Churchill; and of his children, had not Arabella charmed the Duke of York while John charmed the Duchess of Cleveland? The family motto of the Churchills, 'Faithful but Unfortunate', was chosen by Sir Winston to solace his descendants.

3

So ended the fateful year of 1936, the year in which Churchill had seen the last chance of successful resistance against Hitler pass, which had seen Communism rampant in France and Spain, which had seen Europe so divided that the League of Nations was notoriously inept, which saw in England a Government 'decided only to be undecided, and resolved to be irresolute'.¹ What remained? During 1937 the new King and Queen were crowned amid ovations that echoed into the remote districts of Europe, for the common people everywhere felt a pledge of better things if Britain had a sovereign who won their respect by his insistence upon standard and example. Churchill had a year to consider the tragic failure of his appeal to board the raft of opportunity before the rising flood bore it away from people about to be engulfed.

Two things struck his attention: one had to do with money. He saw that gold was being dug out of the earth in South Africa, in Russia, in Canada only to be conveyed to America and buried again in the earth. That was making a farce of the housekeeping of the world: it was enslaving Europe to American bankers. The other line of thought was more familiar: it

¹ Watchman, *Right Honourable Gentlemen*, p. 119.

was to come to some sort of agreement with at least Italy, or he asked 'shall we be nakedly exposed to the challenge of two harassed Dictators at the head of two impoverished nations armed to the teeth?'¹

He still begged and argued for conciliation. He carefully examined all differences with Italy in order to find a solution: he quoted the Bible: 'Agree with thine adversary quickly whilst thou art in the way with him.'² And he insisted, both in newspapers and in the House of Commons, that the powers should work for a solution of the Spanish War by giving Spain what she had under King Alfonso, independence, constitutional freedom and a monarchy. Nazis and Communists alike threatened this principle of liberating monarchy whether in Spain or in Austria. Again and again Churchill appealed to the dictators that having won so much, they should allow success to bring them a mellow, genial air. 'I find myself pilloried by Dr. Goebbels's Press as an enemy of Germany,' he wrote, 'that description is quite untrue. Before the war I proposed to Von Tirpitz a naval holiday. If this had been accepted, it would enormously have eased the European tension and possibly have averted the catastrophe. At the moment of the armistice, as is well known, I proposed filling a dozen liners with food, and rushing them to Hamburg as a gesture of humanity. As Secretary of State for War in 1919, I pressed upon the Supreme Council the need of lifting the blockade, and laid before them the reports from our Generals on the Rhine which eventually procured that step. I took a great deal of personal responsibility in sending home months before they would otherwise have been liberated, about one hundred thousand German prisoners, who were caged up in the Pas de Calais. I was vehemently opposed to the French invasion of the Ruhr. In order to prevent a repetition of it, I exerted myself in Mr. Baldwin's Cabinet to have the Treaty

¹ *Step by Step*, p. 141.

² *Ibid*, p. 179.

of Locarno made to cut both ways, so that Germany as well as France had British protection against aggression. Therefore no-one has a right to describe me as the enemy of Germany except in war time.

‘But my duty lies to my own country.’¹ That was Churchill’s plea for reason, for understanding, for the good of the world. But he saw it being prevented by a militarism which both impoverished and menaced Europe. ‘*Dictators ride to and fro on tigers from which they dare not dismount And the tigers are getting hungry.*’²

4

With the opening of 1938, Mr Churchill’s patience began to give way: for the first time there was a change in his tone. He had issued his warning nearly two years before, and now the warning was being proved true. As soon as Franco had fought back through snow and ice to the firm fortress of Teruel, Hitler began those sallies to the east which Churchill, like all the Powers abroad, had prognosticated with tragic precision. But at this point there also comes a gap into Mr. Churchill’s argument, a gap not due to any vagueness in his own thought but forced into the texture of his thinking by the treachery of imperfect men. The position is this. The more fiercely the tigers roared in the hungry countries, so must the satisfied countries join together to defend themselves. So much the more must Churchill cleave to France. But France, still controlled by the Left, was still grossly interfering in the cause which Communism, as Churchill frankly recognized, had made its own in Spain.³ France was still run by a clique which

¹ *Step by Step*, p. 167.

² *Ibid*, p. 186

³ R. Sencourt, *Spain’s Ordeal*, pp. 213, 222. A War Museum at San Sebastian was crowded with French war material captured by Franco.

cultivated Prague and Moscow; the men in power in France still refused to come to any kind of settlement; and Europe began to speak familiarly of two categories of powers: the haves and the have nots.

It is a simple and unarguable fact that the world policies of the powers had behind them huge economic facts: France had areas of 4,766,000 square miles, Russia 8,000,000 square miles, Britain 12,000,000 square miles. These vast areas were at the service of smaller areas and finally of certain concentrated business interests. Against these, Germany and Italy had areas the one of 181,000 square miles, the other of 120,000 square miles.¹ Let us look roughly at these ratios: as between Italy and France they were one to thirty-nine; as between Germany and Britain they were one to fifty. Yet Germany's population was half as numerous again as that of Britain. While Italy's population was increasing by nearly half a million a year against a stationary population in France. This meant not only a great addition of opportunity to business men in the rich Empires: it put both for peace and for war huge additions of power into the hands of their governments; and the only way to answer it was that machinery of murder which dinned so grimly into Mr. Churchill's ears: 'Night and day the forges roar, the hammers descend, the hellish implements of slaughter pour out to multitudes of training troops.'²

Such then was the situation: Mr. Churchill, viewing it as an Englishman and a patriot, saw the monster advancing to devour his 'fat, opulent, free-spoken but defenceless country'; viewing it as a man, and not less as a patriot, he had given warning beforehand of the need to be just and generous in good time. Hoping against hope, he both pleaded with the dictators and prodded Britain. But nothing could alter either

¹ For a further analysis see Frank H. Simonds and Brooks Emeny: *World Policies of the Great Powers*.

² *Step by Step*, p. 186.

the needs he had already defined; or even the facts he had refrained from mentioning. Again and again, for instance, Mussolini argued for his four-power pact to bind the great powers of Europe in a common policy of development against Bolshevism; again and again the French Governments of the Left had replied by rejecting him in favour of Bolshevism, of that Bolshevism which Churchill himself stigmatized in 1937 as 'the morbid degeneration of Trotskyite Communism'.¹ The Western powers, in their hatred and fear of the dictators, refused either to redress grievances or combine in a constructive plan. Their masses and many of their newspapers were under the influence of Communist propaganda. '*The citadel*', as Churchill himself wrote the year before, '*will be stormed under the banners of Liberty and Democracy*.'²

That is the anguished situation which Mr. Churchill and the democracies had now to affront. They saw against them forces in many ways pagan and brutal, and certainly military, machiavellian and uncompromising, after they had forfeited their strategic gauge to restrain Hitler's forces from Eastern Europe. Besides they themselves had omitted to restore the prosperity their settlement had broken on the Danube.

Mr. Churchill had with fine prescience and unremitting perseverance trumpeted his warnings that they had lagged far behind in armaments of land and air, till something—though not enough—had been done. Neither he nor the Allied Governments had produced any constructive plan for dealing with the anomalies of unequal possessions either for their conquered enemy, Germany, or for Italy, their faithful ally. What justice could condone, what prudence ratify this policy of sloth and greed, this habit of barking from the manger to keep the hungry cows from the hay, this fear of revenge and militarism combined with inaction to restrain it, this sinister lack of principle which, at any sign of a hunger movement from their

¹ *Step by Step*, p. 146.

² *Great Contemporaries*, p. 199.

neighbours, rushed to concert measures with a gang of degenerate criminals, tyrannizing asiatically over well-stored and gigantic conglomerations of area, or hurrying out to plan wholesale murder and satanic disorders in the Christian West? Yet such was the programme of Demos. Europe was fatally divided. Two great powers, rich and free, forgot the enterprise of justice and denounced the faults of two other great powers who were hungry and constrained, who clamoured for justice while they abjured freedom. But the trouble of the world, lamented Churchill, is that 'when nations are strong, they are not always just, and when they wish to be just they are often no longer strong'.¹

5

Such was the problem which faced Neville Chamberlain when in 1937, at the age of sixty-eight, he found himself in control of the machinery of government in Britain. No temporizer but a man of business, enterprising, clear-headed, courageous, with a highly developed sense of honesty, justice and practical affairs, he realized the difficulty, and set energetically to work along the lines which Mr. Churchill had always recommended, and was still recommending. One thing he saw plainly, that one must do what one could for justice, and one must conciliate till one had forged a shield and sword. A defenceless and impotent man must not brandish provocation and threats: on the contrary, he must gain time and make plans. With a patience and a resolution not inferior to Churchill's, Chamberlain set out to put Churchill's advice to the test of international action with a resolution, a skill and a prudence to which Churchill paid full tribute, as 'a policy of a most decided character and of capital importance'.²

The great tests came in 1938: first in the rape of Austria on

¹ *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 301.

² *Step by Step*, p. 300.

March the 11th, and in September in the threat of war against Czecho-Slovakia; then the prophecy made by Churchill in the House of Commons on the 6th of March 1936—and suppressed from the newspapers—was startlingly and uncompromisingly fulfilled.

In the case of Austria action was difficult. Hitler struck like lightning in the night. The Austrian people, far from resisting, received him for the most part with acclamation. There was little chance of helping them even if they had resisted: they were in fact only one example of how the Allies had failed to deal with the whole Danubian problem. There was in fact nothing that could be done, but Mr. Churchill put his finger on the essentials twice: on March the 14th in the House of Commons, on March the 18th in the *Daily Telegraph*. It is true that he invoked the Collective Security which the Communists and their friends, especially through the Spanish War, had shattered; it is true that he occasioned a laugh by speaking of Geneva; but against these idealistic dreams, in which he quite frankly indulged from time to time, he insisted on the strategic result that economically, politically, strategically, Czecho-Slovakia (as it was still called) was strangled. It had become a sausage in the mouth of a hyena. And unless Germany would at last be reasonable in dealing with this difficulty, he saw the prospect of miseries beyond the dreams of hell.¹

6

Six anxious months, while the dreams of hell came nearer: and in September Mr. Chamberlain in his seventieth year displayed a courage, an ingenuity and a resource which Mr. Churchill in his highest moments has never surpassed. The situation was desperate. Cool and thorough, as always, Hitler had measured the chances. He saw that cyclonic assaults could

¹ *Step by Step*, p. 226.

storm Czecho-Slovakia from every side at once; he saw that the neighbours, Poland and Hungary, would support his attack. He had seen that Russia, who in any case would have to traverse Poland and Roumania, intended no help. He knew that the Beneš State was much divided, and that the party he was supporting could already turn from inside the line of defences known as the Czech Maginot Line; and, most important of all, he knew that the Allies were unprepared; especially in the air. He had every prospect at that time of being able to bomb Paris and London to dust. He knew further that the Conservative interests in both countries were unwilling to fight for so questionable an entity as Czecho-Slovakia. He therefore pressed on, with the combined craft and roughness of which he was a master, to defeat his personal enemy, and a race which for twenty years had been inconsiderate and often arrogant to Germans.¹ Like Lenin, Hitler had satisfied his cravings for justice by his workings for revenge. He heard voices: but unlike those of Joan of Arc, his voices were the voices of malignance and ferocity which dulled his conscience to those appeals for constructive generosity so often made by Mr. Churchill. He therefore proposed to Mr. Chamberlain projects which he hoped would be refused: when even these were accepted, he asked at Godesberg for more; he was driving steadily on towards carnage, a carnage for which the Western Powers were not militarily prepared.

7

On September the 20th Mr. Churchill hurried to Paris to confer with M. Reynaud and other French friends. On his return, on the evening of September the 21st, he issued an appeal for immediate action and the summoning of Parliament. The Government responded to his appeal.

¹ Cf. R. Freund, *Watch Czecho-Slovakia*, p. 57.

It was now thirty-seven years since Mr. Churchill first entered the House of Commons, but he had never known a scene quite such as this. The sense of impending calamity rode it like an incubus. It was at the moment when the horror was thickest in the air that a message arrived from Mussolini suggesting that, after all, he had found a way out. Mr. Churchill's own tears witnessed his share in thankfulness for the deliverance. He walked over to Mr. Chamberlain and shook him by the hand.

Mr. Chamberlain returned to Germany, and at Munich succeeded in honourably averting the disaster, and the representatives parted with affirmations that the understanding so strongly advocated through the years by Churchill, and by Mussolini, had been at last achieved.

Nothing remained but to make this sense of relief and warmth a practical reality by mutual concessions. Hitler having now attained the objects he announced might now have well exchanged a policy of armament for one of amity and social advancement. The Four Power Pact was within reach at last.

It was at this point that we reach the curious and sinister disappointment that showed how tyrannical the forces of evil in Europe had become. Daladier indeed returned to an ovation in Paris, but before long Mr. Chamberlain was facing angry men in the House of Commons who had forgotten the tears of gratitude they had shed on September the 28th. They had been disgusted with Hitler's succession of tricks, and by a new outburst against the Jews which followed in November. To this just resentment, some added the acrimony of party feeling.

Nor was this the only disappointment. Mussolini had proffered his good offices freely; he had saved Paris and London from a hideous disaster; and he might well have expected as a reward that his claims for economic justice would now be

heard, or at least that the French would withdraw their support from Red Spain; but none of these things happened. Mussolini, after some weeks of conciliation, gradually became irate, and, counting on a French strike which did not occur, he encouraged his newspapers to make claims on France for Corsica and Nice which the French judged to be, and were meant to be, insulting.

As for Mr. Churchill, he had seemed after Munich almost to doubt whether the war should not have been joined. Ignoring what had been proved of the strategic powerlessness of Czecho-Slovakia by the Embassy at Berlin and the Legation at Prague, Mr. Churchill toyed with an idea of Mr. Duff Cooper that Hitler was unprepared in the west, and that the moment had therefore come for the French Army to strike. Such a conjecture was not only weakened by the strategic impotence of Prague, but received no support from the mood of the French people, and the expert opinion of military advisers in Paris and London. It ignored the good offices of Mussolini, and since Hitler's word had not yet been broken, it would have engaged the Allies to desperate danger in a cause not unquestionably necessary, and for which already Prague would pay a capital penalty.¹

8

On October the 16th Mr. Churchill made a broadcast to America. It already voiced a sense of disillusionment. He reminded his hearers that he had been pleading for a collective action in favour of the law: that action had not been forthcoming. Hitler had had his way: but, continued Churchill, 'the question which is of interest to a lot of ordinary people, common people, is whether the destruction of the Czecho-Slovak

¹ 'It was solely thanks to Mr. Chamberlain's pertinacity that a futile and senseless war was averted.' Sir Nevile Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 168.

republic will bring a blessing or a curse upon the world. We must all hope it will bring a blessing: that after we have averted our gaze for a while from the frown of subjugation and liquidation, everyone will breathe more freely. . . . But are these hopes well founded, or are we merely making the best of what we had not the force or virtue to stop. . . . Has any benefit or progress ever been achieved by the human race by submission to wrong-doing backed by force?’

Mr. Churchill pointed out that in Germany the rights of the individual are wholly subjected to the claims of the State, to racial persecution, religious intolerance and the cult of war. Communist tyranny and Nazi tyranny, he said, are the same thing. Like the Communists, the Nazis tolerate no opinion but their own: like the Communists, they feed on hatred; like the Communists they must seek from time to time, and always at shorter intervals, a new target, a new prize, a new victim. The dictator in all his pride was held in the grip of his party machine. He could go forward; he could not go back. He must blood the hounds to show them sport or else, like Actaeon of old, be devoured by them. All strong without, he is all weak within.

To this reasonable and penetrating admonition, Hitler replied in a public speech in terms gratuitously insulting. He said that if Churchill trafficked less with traitors and more with Germans, he would realize the madness and stupidity of his utterance. To these provoking words, all the worse because they were an attack on a private member of the House of Commons, Mr. Churchill again on November the 6th made an answer of the most admirable moderation. He repeated that his object was not aggression but defence, and that was a motive German patriots should both understand and respect. The whole world, he said, would rejoice to see the Hitler of peace and tolerance, and nothing would adorn his name in world history so much as acts of magnanimity and mercy,

and of pity to the forlorn and the friendless, the weak and the poor.

It was not until the succeeding March that Mr. Churchill's instinctive distrust of Hitler's mood at Munich was justified. Now it was that Hitler spurned his promises, and in mad attempt to discredit Chamberlain—an attempt which the Bolshevik General Krivitski tells us was engineered by Stalin¹—Hitler threw out honour as offal to the Russian gang whom he had so long and so justly denounced, and made himself their abettor, their disciple—and their dupe.

9

There is perhaps nothing in Mr. Churchill's career so startling as the fact that some months after Hitler ceased to inveigh against Bolshevism, he himself ceased likewise. Carried on a current of popular feeling which had ignored his own warnings, he now began to envisage the possibility that the danger from the Rome-Berlin axis might force the Western Powers into the politics of the Popular Front and ally Britain with Bolshevism that had sworn to strangle her. The bitter and corroding fact was that while he, the British public, and the Allied governments were preparing themselves for this compromise with Russia, this power which had never withdrawn its avowal to destroy them was consummating the plan of secret engagements calculated to support Hitler in his craving for war.

Indeed the main trouble that had really wrecked the constructive opportunity of Munich was the mentality of Hitler himself. When he was determined on a crushing war against Beneš, he had been held back by the ovation given to Chamberlain on the very soil of Germany, and by the diplomatic

¹ Krivitski, *I was Stalin's Agent*. Cf. Diplomatic Correspondent in *Manchester Guardian*, 13 September 1939.

skill with which Chamberlain had finally frustrated Hitler's design for immediate war. His vanity was injured; his voice had been ignored. The reaction was bitter and extreme.¹ He had thought out his position, organized his forces, and then pursued his new and fatal line. It was to incite Mussolini against France while he began to array the whole weight of German opinion against Chamberlain, and to look wherever he could for enemies of Chamberlain. His resentment stopped at nothing, not even at the denial of his dearest convictions. He soon saw that at Munich it was not merely his own plans for war that had been checked, but also those of Stalin. In Moscow newspapers the reactions to the settlement had been swift, naive and savage. The dictators of Russia and Prussia suddenly found a fellow feeling, and Hitler flung himself into the coil of what he had himself described as a poisonous snake seeking to twist itself around the body of Germany and crush it to death. The raging combination of a revolutionary Russia with a revolutionary Reich which Churchill had foretold as early as 1921 had come together now. It is now some sixteen or seventeen years, he might have said, since I saw this menace and surely there never lighted on the earth a more appalling vision.¹ Then I saw it far above the horizon over vast plains of monotony and bog. Now it comes nearer, bringing death and misery and woe.

10

But Mr. Churchill had reserved these echoes from Burke for a personage quite other than Hitler or Stalin—for Lady Astor—and he remained in apparent oblivion of the accumulating evidence that Berlin and Moscow were drawing together. Yet that idea began to be voiced in many quarters.

¹ Sir N. Henderson's *Failure of a Mission*, pp. 173-82, gives a thorough analysis of Hitler's reactions.

The most obvious indication was that very soon after Munich propaganda against Russia faded from the German papers. Rumours of a pact between Moscow and Berlin were reported by the French Ambassador in Berlin, M. Coulondre, at the beginning of May; an announcement in the same sense was made in the *Figaro*. The project was discussed in several books, that of Dr. Rauschning, *The Revolution of Destruction*, that of Herr Peter Drucker, *The End of Economic Man*, and in *Danubian Destiny* by Mr. Graham Hutton. Mr. Churchill's own warning in *The World Crisis* had anticipated them all, and stood through the years like Cassandra on a monument.

The German Ambassador in London made no secret of the fact that Hitler was definitely assured that Russia would do nothing to help Poland. But the most final evidence of all was that in spite of repeated attempts and untiring compromises, the Allied proposals succeeded in effecting nothing at Moscow. It was obvious that it was being delayed for some strong cause.¹ But under the influence of friends who rallied round him and invited his co-operation, friends like Mr. Eden and Mr. Duff Cooper, who had quarrelled with Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Churchill continued to press for agreement with Stalin, and bringing Warsaw to accept the support of Moscow. The Poles themselves knew better: but even they were not aware of their powerlessness; they fancied they could counter tanks with cavalry, and so affront huge mechanized invasion advancing with fierce speed from every quarter at once. It is true, as we shall see, that British and French specialists were aware of their danger: but if any word of the warning seemed to reach the ears of Mr. Churchill, he showed no sign.

¹ Sir N. Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 239. Count Ciano, speech of 16th December 1939. On the 18th of May I myself had a long talk with the German Ambassador, who told me that Hitler was absolutely assured both that the Poles could not defend themselves and the Russians would do nothing to help them. I immediately reported this talk to the Foreign Office.—R.S.

He had indeed become familiar to the British public in a role that belied the crusade he had carried on for twenty years. Lauded by popular opinion, like some popular figure lifted shoulder-high by an enthusiastic mob, he was borne in a reverse direction to that which he had travelled all the years of his life. He was acclaimed as the enemy of Germany, the friend of Russia, the enemy of conciliation, the devourer of fire. And as such certain newspapers clamoured for his return to the Chamberlain Government in company with Mr. Eden, as though their lines of thought, or their endowments, were practically indistinguishable! Such are the paradoxes of current politics.

And so we watch Mr. Churchill through the six months from the seizure of Prague to the attack on Poland. For a time he seems under the pressure of opinion to lose his grip on the hard strategic facts: a veil rises between his intuitive distrust of Bolshevism, and the fresh justification furnished in Moscow week by week, of those long wet depressing months from June to August. English and English only, he planned to defend his country by an expediency which was in fact impracticable, while Chamberlain, equally deceived, weighed his warnings against those of diplomatic agents and military experts who both agreed that Poland could do little.

It was natural enough when Hitler marched into Prague that Churchill should say 'I told you so', as indeed he did say at the time both in Parliament and out of it;¹ and he insisted on his views about Munich in speech after speech in his constituency. On April the 13th in the House of Commons he spoke of Russia as a counterpoise being, though enormous, uncertain; but after that he seemed to give his entire confidence to Stalin. He spoke strongly in this sense both in and out of Parliament on May the 19th; on June the 5th, at Woodford Wells, he quoted a French general saying: 'Without

¹ See *The Times*, 15 March, 7d and 16b; 17 March, 8d.

Russia no Eastern front: with Russia there should be no war.' On June the 28th, addressing the City Carlton Club, he spoke again with amenity of Germany, but he still strongly urged on the agreement with Russia as the only way out of the situation.

His confidence was indeed high, for the final agreements for entente between Moscow and Berlin had already been completed.

In July he did not speak, but his alignment with the Opposition was never so marked as on August the 2nd, when, in the House of Commons, he asserted it to be highly probable that Britain could have put through an alliance with Russia the year before, and that Russia's friendship was the chief thing for which to work. Yet before a week was out, Hitler was summoning Ciano to Berchtesgaden to hear that the whole agreement was now completed. Stalin, denounced by Mr. Churchill as a criminal, two years before, may well have smiled. And yet the words of indignation stood, as they still stand, in Mr. Churchill's book for all to see. Even the wisest of us can be misled for lack of information.

But if it was surprising that Mr. Churchill did not realize that his own prognostications were being fulfilled, what are we to say of the Government? The Government, and only the Government, knows the reports of the Secret Service; the Government, and only the Government, co-ordinates the dispatches of its envoys; the Government and only the Government, knows the advice of its experts in defence and war. If these did not instruct the public on the facts, it was less wonder that Churchill's judgement was at fault. Misled by public opinion once more, both the Government and its critics were persisting in being tricked to forget their warnings in the very months that their fulfilment was accomplished. The Allies' gullibility showed Russia the way to trap them and Poland together, and so at last engineer the war she had so

long planned. She thus achieved her double object: to induce them to weaken one another till revolution could spread Bolshevism, within, while Russia strengthened her national power both by her own immunity and by her territorial gains.

If here we have seen an example, even though an almost solitary example, of Mr. Churchill's inconsistency, it would be misleading to ignore it; it would be still more misleading not to explain it. It is due manifestly to two causes: firstly, his patriotic desire to save his country, and France; secondly to his allegiance to that public opinion which Pascal called queen of the world.

No-one is infallible. Mr. Churchill as a driver takes his corners at full speed. If at times, from impulsiveness or defiance, he swerves, or at times rushes the red lights, and needs exceptionally strong brakes, he is none the less Britain's best man.

NOTE ON FREEMASONRY

The author has already explained that his references to Freemasonry apply only to the Continental Lodges which are anti-religious

As the book shows, Mr. Churchill referred to the activities of these in the case of France, and attacked them severely in the case of Russia and Spain. His whole policy, which is loyal, conciliatory, constructive, and based on justice within and between nations, runs counter to it. He acts in harmony with the Church between which and the Grand Orient there is open war.

I know of course that it is an innovation for an English historian to do this; but the political activity of the Grand Orient is frankly mentioned on the Continent; and I believe it helps to clear the issues if I speak distinctly of the element to which he has referred, and which for years his work has countered.

CHAPTER 14

The Colleague of Chamberlain

There can be no question that, after the announcement of the Berlin-Moscow Pact, the military experts of France and England knew all too well that the neck of Poland was bare to Hitler's axe. The Western Allies were each served by a General Staff who were far too sane to imagine that their forces could risk aggression on the grand scale, because in aeroplanes and land armaments they were themselves far inferior to their German enemy. All they could hope was a respite to mobilize while the weight of the onslaught of mechanized troops, combining tanks with aeroplanes, fell on the living flesh of men and horses. A horse can as easily be wounded or killed by a shell or bullet as a man: but unlike a man it cannot fire a machine-gun, and the vast number of trained men and horses in Poland were known to be at the mercy of the sweeping transformation of military methods which Germany, even more than Britain, had made since the opening of the Spanish War in 1936. By this massed mechanism cavalymen are simply mown down. It was now known that if an attack were pressed hard enough with the combined forces of armed lorries, tanks, machine-guns and aeroplanes, neither numbers nor entrenchments could prevail. And the Poles had no entrenchments; none of those defences in depth where in wood after wood, on hill after hill, or by taking full advantage of river-banks, an ingenious and thorough prepara-

tion of forts can hold up an army's advance. The military attachés at Berlin and Warsaw had long been aware of the Poles' deficiencies: Sir Edmund Ironside and French commanders equally distinguished had made inspections and endorsed these reports. It was indeed too true that Hitler, having made his bargain with the Russians early in the summer, and now ratified it, was free to take on the Poles what vengeance he would.

In these circumstances, the three Governments of London, Paris and Rome were compelled to hesitate. Had Poland not been guaranteed, Hitler would undoubtedly have subjected it as he had already subjected the Czechs: and having subjected it, he would be free to strike in the west, in the north, or to the Adriatic or the Aegean; and with every move, the strategic position of the Allies would have been weaker. If, on the other hand, the Allies declared war, they must subject Poland to swift and certain annihilation, just as Abyssinia had been subjected by the Italians, while they themselves must then expect to meet the full weight of an attack to counter which they had lost the opportunity. The issue of this war had been settled three years before on the Rhine. The full weight of these facts was known to the governments, and to them alone. Their dilemma was excruciating.

Rome was faced with a collapse of a friendly power which was sympathetic to her and was also a bulwark against Bolshevism. This collapse would make Germany master of Central and Eastern Europe: the war would also be ruinous to Italian trade. The policy of Mussolini had consistently been one of constructive conciliation, and at this juncture he once again did everything he possibly could in the interests of settlements and peace as, with such scant reward, he had done at Munich eleven months before. Not only did his Ambassador in Berlin labour tirelessly, but he also sent every kind of warning and every kind of constructive suggestion to Paris.

These warnings were not unheeded. The French Government were conscious of their weakness, their people were in no mood for war. They at least understood that the time had gone by when they called on England three years before. What was happening at Westminster?

2

Those who heard Mr. Chamberlain speak in the House of Commons on the evening of September the 2nd saw that he was himself influenced by the French reluctance. His words, though firm, were restrained and grave: but they were met with such a storm of force and passion that he could no longer support the negotiations between Rome and Paris. He must cede to the House of Commons or go. And perhaps he *would* have been wiser to resign. Although Mussolini had made every possible proposal for conciliation, Hitler, at every turn, conscious of his strategic preponderance, had been provocative, and forced the issues by his revenge. Normal negotiations had broken down in Berlin. Feelings of outrage and honour were strong in the hearts of Englishmen.

During this exciting evening, Mr. Churchill did not speak. He waited, conscious of the weight that hung on Europe, anxious for a vindication of the law, mindful, nevertheless, of what he himself had written that long since the appointed time had come—and gone. He did not speak until the next morning, when Mr. Chamberlain had announced that war had been declared, and then his words had the full soberness of an informed judgement:

‘In this solemn hour’, he said therefore, ‘it is a consolation to recall and to dwell upon our repeated efforts for peace. All have been ill starred, but all have been faithful and sincere, and this is of the highest moral value; and not only moral value, but of practical value at this present time because the whole-

hearted concurrence of scores of millions of men and women whose co-operation is indispensable and whose comradeship and brotherhood are indispensable is the only foundation upon which the trial and tribulation of modern war can be endured and surmounted. This moral conviction alone ensures that ever fresh resilience which renews the strength and energy of people in long, doubtful and dark days. Outside the storms of war may blow and the land may be lashed with the strength and fury of the gales, but in our hearts this Sunday morning there is peace. The hands may be active, but our consciences are at rest.

‘We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the severity of the ordeal—to which we shall not be found unequal. . . .’ Such was the opening of Mr. Churchill’s speech. He went on to say that he was thankful to see men equal to their task. He argued that if Englishmen had forfeited some of their rights and liberties to the administration, yet the British tradition of justice and freedom should govern their rulers till their rights and liberties were restored. This war, he said, is no war for domination or imperial aggrandisement or material gain: no war to shut out any country from its sunlight and means of progress. ‘It is a war, viewed in its inherent policy, to establish on impregnable rocks the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man.’

Such was the tenour of Mr. Churchill’s last speech as a private member. It was consistent with a career of forty-five years of service to the State, a career in which, as the heir of his father, he had worked always for moderation, for justice, for peace and for advancement from those early days at Sandhurst when he had engaged against ‘prudes on the prowl’. On India’s North-west Frontier, on the Nile, in South Africa, he had prepared a generous imperial policy where military enterprise should enforce the cause of justice, and where Britain

should work for the welfare of the world. He had supported that beneficent imperialism in Parliament, and joined it with a crusade for social justice and economic freedom. He had been against England engaging in Continental war, until to be Naval Minister he made his compromise with Haldane. He had argued again and again to prevent the wastage of lives on the Western Front. He had always been generous to Germany till her attitude compelled him to sound warnings, and even now he was under no delusion about past shortcomings in his own nation, about the strategic troubles affronting the Allies, over the value of Mr. Chamberlain's effort to secure justice for the Central Powers. It was with this record that after ten years of vigorous action as an independent member in governments which had been in earlier years too deaf to his double warnings about justice and preparedness that he once again accepted high office in the Government.

Such an acceptance marked no change in his views. In view of his reputation as a fighter, there was reason enough not to appoint him to the Cabinet, for such an appointment would have been taken as a warlike gesture. But Mr. Churchill had spoken many times in favour of Mr. Chamberlain's activity, and paid many compliments to his Minister for Co-ordination of Defence. The British Navy, he had said, speaking on the 1st of February 1939 at Buckhurst Hill, was already stronger for the purposes of any task it might have to discharge in Europe than it had ever been before. The methods of dealing with submarine attack had, by the long care of the Admiralty, in which Lord Chatfield, the new Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, had played so distinguished a part, become vastly more potent. He already felt confident that in any quarrel in which Britain had the goodwill of the United States, she would be able to preserve indefinitely the command of the oceans of the world, and consequently to ensure the mobilization in a righteous cause of all the immeasurable latent re-

sources not only of the British Empire but eventually of challenged civilization itself.

This compliment to Lord Chatfield was renewed in the House of Commons on March the 16th. Mr. Churchill endorsed Lord Chatfield's strategic doctrine that it was the duty of the Royal Navy to seek out and destroy the enemy's fleet. 'But it is not possible', added Mr. Churchill, 'to be simultaneously strong everywhere. Sacrifices must be made, and punishment taken in some theatres in order that speedy victory might be gained in the decisive theatres. Lord Chatfield's doctrine was no doubt of general application, but none the less it was most timely because such a doctrine vigorously applied will influence the foreign policy of every Mediterranean Power. It would deter possible antagonists from attacking us or our allies, and would encourage other States animated by most friendly feelings towards us to pursue this path in common.

'It is refreshing', had concluded Mr. Churchill, 'in times like these to take an afternoon off from black care and to dwell upon the great and growing strength of our Navy, and to feel that with the new inventions in the air and under water properly countered, as they are being countered, they do not in any degree deprive us of the measureless resources of air power with all that has so often followed in its train.'

Throughout the whole speech, Mr. Churchill had shown that he was closely watching the whole function and position of the Navy. He summed up the situation with an optimism supported by masterly grasp of detail. He pointed out that with the advances made in defence against submarines and aeroplanes, the position in the Mediterranean was thoroughly encouraging.

At the same time, he had sounded a note of warning about the cruisers Germany was building and the danger of scrapping any British ship of the *Royal Sovereign* class. The whole

speech was both favourable to the then Government, and showed that his favour was justified by a precise technical understanding of the work of the Admiralty.

This speech had been anticipated by another at Chigwell five days earlier. He there said that he had thanked Mr. Chamberlain personally for the firm declaration he had made about the unity of France and Britain. He approved them both in the energy of their measures of defence and for their strong declaration of foreign policy. Even with regard to Munich, which he always refused to endorse, he admitted that the Prime Minister's policy had had a good effect on the populations of the dictator countries.

It was of course after Herr Hitler's act of aggression on Prague that Mr. Chamberlain announced that he would not only guarantee Poland, but that he would also seek the collaboration of Russia in doing so. He announced his policy in the House of Commons on April the 3rd.

'I find myself in the most complete agreement with the Prime Minister,' said Mr. Churchill in reply. 'I listened to his speech with the greatest attention, and both in its assertions, and in its reservations, in its scope, in its emphasis and in its balance, I find myself entirely in accord. . . . We seek for no guarantees for ourselves that we do not desire Germany to enjoy as well.'

Yes, said Mr. Churchill amid laughter, if Denmark threatens to overrun the Reich, we shall defend the Reich. He would support the maintenance of law and order to any lengths: and he complimented Mr. Chamberlain on the sacrifices he had made to secure the confidence of the German and Italian peoples in his sense of justice. 'Our first duty is to establish respect for law and public faith in Europe.'

It was therefore not as a hostile critic that Mr. Churchill came to the Admiralty: it was to advise on work he had already approved. He came with willing agreement into Lord Chat-

field's Committee, and he joined the Cabinet prepared cordially to co-operate.

But neither he nor the Government, which had from the Secret Service and elsewhere all the national resources for information, had been prepared for the news from Russia. He had therefore to use the elasticity and adaptability of his mind in helping both them and himself to sweeping changes of view.

3

Although the Polish collapse was anticipated, few had guessed how swiftly it would come: the Allied authorities never expected Smigly-Rydz to ignore their technicians' advice and to engage Germany on ground where his outmoded forces must be useless; they never expected the Polish aerodromes to be bombed to pieces before the armies were ready; they never expected Russia to stab Poland in the back; they never expected Russia to close the northern frontier of Roumania, or to counter Germany's eastward drive on the Danube; they never expected Russia would take over the Baltic States and attack Finland. Nor did they themselves expect to mobilize undisturbed; they feared sudden and overwhelming attacks in the west; they feared immediate hostility from Italy, not without support from Spain.

All these surprises had thrown a strain upon the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. It was not for him either to forestall the Secret Service or formulate the foreign policy. It was his, on the other hand, to plan through long months the dispositions necessary to meet the eventualities expected. It was now to develop new plans with the utmost rapidity.

Mr. Churchill, therefore, took his place at a most opportune moment both in the Cabinet and in the Committee of Defence. Though Lord Chatfield combined his eminence as an

admiral with months of general supervision, he naturally welcomed the swift brain, the long and replete memory, and the grasp of practical administration which Mr. Churchill brought to his committee. Beside this committee, which met daily, the Cabinet also met at ten every morning, and Mr. Churchill held yet a third meeting at ten every evening at the Admiralty with his Sea Lords, after which he drafted his orders and arrangements till long after midnight. Not merely at the Admiralty but on the two other Councils he took a leading part.

For at the Cabinet, he more than another spoke of the plans of general defence. With his expert knowledge, he could criticize and stimulate the administration of any department. He knew the Ministers: Sir John Simon, for twenty years his colleague, more urbane, calm, powerful than ever now at the age of seventy-two; Sir Samuel Hoare with his high voice, and his handsome features; Lord Halifax with his sharp profile, his tall figure, his deep conciliatory tones, his weight of unselfish purpose, his quiet but never negligible words; and there were his own colleagues in the Co-ordination of Defence. Beside Lord Halifax sat Lord Chatfield, his hair silvered, his complexion high, the sailor's simplicity and efficiency showing in every word of sound judgement he utters; Sir Kingsley Wood, plump, debonair, efficient; Mr. Hore-Belisha, not less plump, with his dark eyebrows marking a face which the newspapers had made more familiar to the masses of the people than the face of any there, and whom, for work on trade and transport, the people loved; and there was still Lord Hankey, who was Secretary twenty-five years ago, Lord Hankey who first thought of the Dardanelles, still quiet, still active, remembering much, but interjecting little: it is another who is writing now, writing pithily, keeping the papers together, bringing up the agenda; Sir Edward Bridges, with his fair hair still thick—efficiency, rightness,

goodness, modesty, just as plain now as when he came up to Magdalen from Eton in 1912, his father Poet Laureate of England. And at the head of the long table sat the Prime Minister, his eyes still keen as stars, his clothes in conspicuous order, his authority so definite and final, and his mind so clear and sure that he was equal to being—in his own way—the dictator of the British Empire.

He has now brought into the Cabinet a man whose gifts in many ways—not in all—surpass his own, and those of any other man in that historic council—who is the most forceful speaker and writer in England. He speaks with the incisive authority of long experience in noble words; with the keenness of a mind that still sweeps fast and far. He is the Minister for the supreme force in the situation, the Royal Navy. And he comes fresh with his ideas, elaborated the night before, and refreshed daily by an hour of sound sleep after lunch. As a fighting Minister, no-one could lead the Cabinet better or better save the country from boredom. He can hit Hitler hard. But fighting is not all: there are other things to cope with than what he calls 'the frenzy of the cornered maniac'. He balances the collapse of Poland against all that is implied by a heartening message from the Queen of Tongatabu.

4

When Mr. Churchill took office, he was busied from the first in supervising what he had supervised twenty-five years before: the freedom of the seas, the locking up of the German Fleet. This time his task was easier: the enemy's strength had diminished; the menace of the submarine had been countered by depth charges. In a short time, the sea was almost clear of German ships. Yet at the very beginning there was one matter which absorbed his attention: the Germans torpedoed the *Athenia*, and it was his affair to relate the story to Parliament.

On September the 26th he was able to give the House of Commons a full account of the-submarine warfare. He told how in the first week our losses by U-boat sinkings amounted to 65,000 tons, in the second week they were 46,000 tons, and in the third week they were 21,000 tons. 'In the last six days', he continued, 'we have lost only 9,000 tons, though one must not dwell on these reassuring figures too much, for war is full of unpleasant surprises, but certainly I am entitled to say that as far as they go, these figures do not need to cause any undue despondency or alarm.'

'Meanwhile the whole vast business of our world-wide trade continues without interruption, and without perceptible diminution. Great convoys of troops are escorted to their various destinations. The enemy's ships and commerce have been swept from the seas. Over 2,000,000 tons of German shipping is now sheltering in German or interned in neutral harbours. . . . We have converted to our use 67,000 more tons of German merchandise than has been lost by our own.'

All through the autumn Mr. Churchill continued to speak in this tone of cautious optimism. Occasionally there were shocks: by a superb piece of skill and daring, a German submarine sank the *Royal Oak* inside Scapa Flow on October the 14th, drowning 800 men; a German raider, afterwards identified as the *Graf Spee*, had escaped to the Atlantic, where she did great damage, but confident in the work of the Allied navies, Mr. Churchill strengthened his earlier links with France and greatly heartened the British people by his pungent broadcasts on October the 1st, November the 12th and December the 18th. The last signalled an event which far outweighed the tragedy of the *Royal Oak*. It was the brilliant exploit by which three light cruisers, the *Ajax*, the *Exeter* and the *Achilles* drove the *Graf Spee* into the harbour of Montevideo.

Early in the morning of December the 13th the *Exeter* sighted the *Graf Spee*: and in spite of being a much lighter

ship, with therefore much lighter guns, she combined her use of a smoke screen with extraordinary daring to come close to the *Graf Spee* and attack. During the morning she was joined by the two other light cruisers, and though they were from time to time badly damaged, they displayed such resource and hardihood that they were able not only to rend down the defences of the big German ship, but at last to drive her into the harbour of Montevideo. British sailors never showed a bolder skill than when they thus defied heavy guns and defeated a ship whose range of gunnery so far surpassed any of their own. For two days the British cruisers waited at the mouth of the neutral harbour for their prey, and then as the ship moved down the waterway towards the sea, she suddenly scuttled herself. So the danger was eliminated, and Mr. Churchill could again be proud and happy to think that, after twenty-five years, he was again responsible to Crown and Parliament for all the business of the Admiralty.

Indeed there was now no criticism whatever of his naval administration: all was praise. The country had begun with December to give its main attention to a quite separate campaign: the attack of the Soviet on Finland. The Finns fought gallantly but against hopeless odds. They were outnumbered by more than forty to one. It was impossible to send them reinforcements on account of the national fears of Sweden and the sympathies of the Norwegians. In Norway, the lower classes were apt to sympathize in the south with the National socialists, in the North with the Reds. Since this was so, it was impossible for the Allies to reach Finland, which after nearly three months of heroic fighting was overpowered.

The immediate result of this was a change of tone in France, a secret session, and a change of premiers. M. Daladier, though still remaining at the War Office, handed over the supreme power to M. Reynaud, who, as soon as he had formed his ministry (it was very much the same party of Freemasons

and Jews as before) declared that he intended to wage 'total war' and hurried over to London to arrange talks with the British Ministers. So ended the month of March. In these three months Mr. Churchill had spoken little. He was known to be a close friend of M. Reynaud, but his speeches were always keyed in a lower tone; while those of M. Reynaud spoke the high words of intention and desire, Mr. Churchill kept close to principles and facts. Yet another difference was that while Mr. Churchill worked excellently with the Conservatives, and was on particularly cordial terms with Mr. Chamberlain, M. Reynaud had difficulties in securing support from the Right in France and as the war went on the French people were turning more towards the Right. The majority for M. Reynaud was hardly more secure than that of M. Daladier had been.

A rapid change now took place in the Cabinet organization in England. Lord Chatfield resigned, and his post was abolished. Mr. Churchill, therefore, as Senior Member of the Defence Committee, now became practically absolute in his control of the Armed Forces of the Crown. At this point, Sir Kingsley Wood handed over the Air Ministry to Sir Samuel Hoare, while at the War Office Mr. Oliver Stanley had three months before succeeded Mr. Hore-Belisha. Mr. Churchill therefore found himself directing the war effort with two new coadjutors, neither of whom seemed quite to possess the phenomenal acumen and combativeness necessary to overtake the lead of Germany.

One sequence of M. Reynaud's visit (the evidence for direct connection is not available) was a closer blockade of the Norwegian coast, down which steel from the Swedish mines at Kirunavara was regularly transported. This strong action came at a moment when M. Reynaud was in great difficulties in obtaining majorities from the two French Chambers. But the attack, whoever planned it, was timed to coincide with an

explosion from Germany, where the occupation of Norway had been long and carefully prepared. Mr. Churchill therefore, on assuming his new responsibilities, found himself facing an extremely delicate situation: he lacked the forces to support a campaign in Norway, and his commanders had not made the careful preparations which would be required by it. It would not have been surprising if this enterprise, which so well supplied the political needs of M. Reynaud, was not equally agreeable to his war chiefs; nor if they had felt the same hesitation about it as old Lord Fisher had felt about the Dardanelles.

However that may be, and whether the strategic judgments of the Allies or their Secret Service were at fault, the result of the Nazi move was swift and startling. The Germans, with that lack of respect for honour and engagements which the world had learnt to expect of them, occupied Denmark and invaded Norway. Mr. Churchill told the whole story to the House of Commons on April the 11th. He showed how the German attack had been long prepared and was set in motion before the Allies acted to close this Norwegian corridor which twenty-five years before had foiled the Allied blockade, as it was doing again. The British Government had long been reluctant to incur the reproach of even a technical violation of international law. 'But gradually as this cruel, deadly war has deepened and darkened, the feeling grew that it would be placing an intolerable burden on the Allies to allow this traffic to continue,' for it was carrying material for the shells that would in the course of time strike down the young men of France and Britain

Mr Churchill then related what he knew of the engagement at Narvik and the Oslo fiord. But he concluded: 'The very recklessness with which Hitler and his advisers have cast the interests of the German Navy upon the wild waters to meet all that moves thereon, makes me feel that these audacious costly operations may be only the prelude to far larger events which

impend on land. We have probably arrived at the first main crunch of the war. . . . While we will not prophesy or boast about battles yet to be fought, we feel ourselves ready to encounter the utmost malice of the enemy.'

5

Such was Mr. Churchill's warning on April the 11th, though he could already say that the German Navy was crippled in important respects. He waited for four weeks before he spoke again, and then, on the night of Wednesday, May the 8th, it was to wind up the historic debate which concentrated its fury on Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain had announced that in future Churchill was to have not only final direction at the Admiralty, but of every arm. He was as it were to be a military dictator: but this did not satisfy the critics of Chamberlain. If the critics' acrimony were concentrated on a particular point, it was that the Navy had not attacked Trondheim more violently. But:

'I take complete responsibility for everything that has been done by the Admiralty and I take my full share of the burden,' said Mr. Churchill. And well he might. He had had a free enough hand ever since he had joined the War Cabinet and the supreme war direction ever since Lord Chatfield resigned. If a criticism could be justly levelled, it was that he had attempted not too little but too much.

'But is it not a fact,' asked Mr. Greenwood, 'that the War Cabinet delayed taking a decision about taking Trondheim?'

'Not for a moment,' answered Mr. Churchill. 'Do dismiss those delusions.'

Nor would he say that the greater mistake had not been Hitler's, who had increased the strain of blockade to which Germany was subjected.

'Oh!' shouted a Labour member.

'Yes,' said Churchill: 'I dare say the honourable gentleman does not like it. He would rather that I have a bad tale to tell. That is why he is skulking in the corner.'

This was met by a hubbub, and shouts of 'Withdraw! Withdraw!'

'No,' said Churchill. 'I will not withdraw it.'

'Is "skulking" a parliamentary word?' asked a Labour member from Glasgow.

The Speaker met the thrust with an agile rejoinder:

'It all depends on whether it is used accurately.'

Again uproar drowned the speech. Churchill stood and shouted, but no-one could hear him.

'All day long,' he complained, 'we have had abuse, and now you won't even listen.'

Surely in a time of peril, he argued, when the house was quieter; surely these attacks and criticisms should be stilled. 'I do not advocate a controversy,' he concluded. 'The Government have stood it all these two days, and if I have broken out it was not that I meant to seek a quarrel. On the contrary I say let pre-war feuds die, forget your personal quarrels. Keep your hatred for the common enemy and ignore party interests. Harness all your energies. Let the whole ability and forces of the nation be hurled into the struggle. Let all the strong horses be pulling at the collar. At no time in the last war were we in greater peril than we are now.'

This was warning enough: but by 39 men, called Conservatives, it was not taken. They voted with the Opposition, reducing the Conservative majority to 81.

Mr. Chamberlain, as he walked towards Downing Street on that May evening, realized that a great change must come and planned a drastic reconstruction of the Government. No Labour men, however, would join the administration if he remained its head. Such men wanted Mr. Churchill. After two days of discussion and conferences, Mr. Churchill was sum-

moned on the evening of Friday, May the 10th, to Buckingham Palace to be told the words that made his long dream come true: a Churchill was to rule supreme at last. But on no quiet seat; from no sumptuous and final Blenheim, rather in what dust, what vexations, what shocks and cataclysms of heavy change! For at dawn that very morning, Hitler found that the skies of Europe were as clear as the Allied controls were dubious. Taking full advantage of their disarray, he drove home his matured design on the defences of Holland and Flanders. But no dykes had been built for such an inundation as this.

It was not for nothing that Chamberlain and Churchill had withdrawn with all speed the forces they had too hastily dispatched to defend a Norway whose heart had long ceased to be her own. The Allies were now to feel how sharp and weighted was the spear of that peril of which clearly, though tardily, both the retiring Premier and the new one had warned the House of Commons.

Meanwhile the new Prime Minister had to devote his main attention not to the heavy news from the fronts, but to the reorganization of a government. His aim was to include all possible shades of opinion from Mr. Bevin on the one side to Sir Henry Page-Croft on the other, and to placate, or reward the critics of the Norway adventure by a specially large proportion of posts. His own post at the Admiralty he courteously handed over to a Baptist preacher whose sincerity and interest he had carefully observed.

He also cut down the War Cabinet to five. Of these two were to be Labour leaders to share the innermost direction of the country; but he kept his grasp firm by balancing them with the two Conservatives he trusted most, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, and his own predecessor, Mr. Chamberlain, whom he had long found both the most effective and the most congenial of all his colleagues in the Cabinet. ~

CHAPTER 15

Britain's Leader at Bay

After long hours of anxiety over news from the Front which was always worse than his sober prognostications, and which broke in upon ingenious attempts to satisfy all parties by his new appointments, and so unite a tormented Empire, the new Prime Minister met Parliament on Monday, May the 13th, with words which echoed Garibaldi: 'I would say to this House, as I have said to those that joined this Government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and suffering. You ask what is my policy. I will say: "It is to wage war by sea, land and air with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us. And to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy." You ask what is our aim. I can answer in one word: it is victory.' And claiming the aid of all, he avowed a mood of buoyancy and hope.

That buoyancy, that hope of victory, expressed the only temper in which the leader can affront the battle. But they were balanced by Mr. Churchill's opening words. This was *indeed* an ordeal of the most grievous kind. While the Dutch and Belgian armies were rapidly forced back, a far worse disaster befell the French Army. For the enemy struck with all

his force through the forest of Ardennes: he struck as he had struck in Poland with an overpowering weight of noise and machinery. He brought into the battle a new tank of seventy tons which was to all other tanks as a battleship is to cruisers: it could knock-out competitors by weight and range. This driving and overpowering combination, which had already shown its calibre to Poland, now came beating, banging, whirring, roaring against the armies defending the River Meuse from Namur up to Sedan.

Sedan! The name had sounded grim to France for seventy years: for there in 1870 the Emperor of the French was captured with all his army and made the prisoner of Bismarck and his Prussians. At that point, a line of wooded hills rises above the southern bank of the river, which in broad and beautiful reaches flows eastward into level country till having reached Belgium it reflects the bold cliffs and forests which rise now on the German side. On this stretch of some sixty miles, the fate and history of Europe were tried once more in ordeal by battle. For two days after the attack on Holland and Belgium had set the western armies of the English in motion, the onslaught fell on this region, and smashed a line which credulity had believed to be the impregnable wall of France. To smash a line! this had through centuries of warfare been the tactical aim of generalship: this again and again had turned the fate of engagements, and often therefore of campaigns. But now it was still more significant, sinister and fateful: for now it had behind it the speed of vehicles which could move at fifty miles an hour, and which brought everywhere they moved the weight of heavier guns. In a very short time it leapt to the eyes of watching commanders that this long breach was irreparable, that through it the German command could pour their tanks and armoured cars over the rolling undulations of Picardy, and so on into Champagne.

Why therefore had the French and British armies moved forward? It had been a principle of the French command not to endanger forces beyond their famous Maginot Line. This principle was not arbitrary. The French had not forgotten that the only means of victory is attack: it had just been proved in Spain, and to this two distinguished generals, Weygand and Duval, had added the arresting rider that such attack was a euphemism for massacre. For the give-and-take of massacre, the French Army was no longer suited: if its numbers were heavily diminished, not only was the man-power of France weakened but that of Germany would be the more preponderant. The British Expeditionary Force, though mobile, was in numbers far inferior. Were it to move from its defensive earth-works, it might well be overpowered, and the line itself prove too weak to hold. Such a consideration forced caution on the French generals, and, as military experts, they were not prepared to dash forward into Belgium, which was demanded alike by the defence of the Low Countries, and by Britain's strategic needs to secure these and their ports, which could easily become a base for attack on herself by aeroplane and submarine. It is plain that between these political claims and the immediate safeguarding of France there was an unsolved conflict. There was a similar conflict between the needs of the French Army and that cry for total war which M. Reynaud had found the only means to ensure a majority for himself in the Chambers.

What the first week of Mr. Churchill's premiership proved was that between the Supreme Command in France and the political direction there was a conflict of views which sharpened into distrust, and from distrust into recrimination. As the large swinging movements of the enemy tightened the grip of the vice on France and Belgium, the French Premier called

desperately for aid on the older generals long since proven, but now away in Spain and Syria, on Pétain and on Weygand. These came into his Cabinet, but they could not change the conclusions which were inevitable to the military mind. The generals who were Conservatives, and had long distrusted the whole policy of Freemasonry, and above all that combination of Eden with Delbos which had alienated Italy and Spain, soon joined with great waves of opinion towards a repudiation of Reynaud, of his Jewish and Masonic colleagues, and by a sad but inevitable connection in thought, of the British Government which had collaborated with those, and whose fatal legacy had been thrust at the most critical of moments upon the new Prime Minister.

It was Mr. Churchill's lot to gain his supreme ambition at the very moment when that meant confronting the disaster inherent in the policy which he had himself denounced. Lesser men would have sat back and said, 'I told you so.' But from a heart from which the chivalry of patriotism could claim any sacrifice, and in which hope, even when bludgeoned, springs eternal, logic could claim no hearing.

His colossal task was complicated by the fact that the War Office was in charge of the third Secretary of State since the war began. First, there had been Mr. Hore-Belisha; secondly Mr. Oliver Stanley; and now Mr. Churchill had placed Mr. Eden there, Mr. Eden, from whose foreign policy in the matter of Abyssinia, of the occupation of the Rhineland, and of Russian intervention in Spain he had been at times strongly disposed to differ. Though Mr. Eden had many affinities with the parties of the Left in France, it could hardly be claimed that he commanded the confidence of her generals; least of all was he admired by the generals about to take command, and, at this point, the French began to blame the British for their disasters, disasters which soon cut off the British Army from its base, its supplies and its line of retreat. In a short time,

Mr. Churchill was to complain that the British forces had not received warning in time; the result was that they were being driven to the coast and, like the Belgian Army, menaced by annihilation.

As these dangers threatened, Mr. Churchill was compelled to high decisions and drastic action.

The British and Belgian armies had not been ordered to fall back, and by the middle of the week were in great danger. On May the 16th, therefore, he flew to Paris. The immediate result was to dismiss General Gamelin, to recall General Weygand as Chief of the General Staff, and to make Marshal Pétain the Deputy Prime Minister. In these moves, the leadership of Mr. Churchill at once made itself felt. On the following Monday, May the 20th, in his first address to the nation as Prime Minister, he warned it gravely of all that had happened, and all that was impending. On Wednesday, May the 22nd, the desperate news that the Germans had reached the Channel ports and therefore finally cut off the British and Belgians took him again to Paris. On Sunday, May the 26th, Reynaud flew to London, and immediately it was announced that in London General Ironside had been replaced at the War Office by General Dill. On the following Tuesday Mr. Churchill had heard such appalling news from the front that he despaired of saving more than a fraction of the British Army from being cut off in Belgium. The King of the Belgians had already been compelled to surrender. After three days' inquiry from the British forces about a guarantee for his retreat, we had failed to obtain a reply. 'I have no intention, therefore,' said Mr. Churchill, 'of suggesting to this House that we should attempt at this moment to pass judgement on the King of the Belgians in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Belgian Army.'¹

¹ Mr. Churchill afterwards spoke in a severer tone such as his ally M. Reynaud had adopted: and possibly the violence of M. Reynaud explains Mr. Churchill's change.

Mr. Churchill spoke of the approach of 'hard and heavy tidings', of grief and of disaster.

He had a triple embarrassment: to affront an overwhelming enemy, to prepare a weakened country, and to negotiate with a crumbling ally. Of these the heaviest encumbrance was the last.

3

The French line of resistance on the river Somme was already weakening on June the 4th. Weygand had done what he could to improvise a system of defence in depth, but how could it stand the organized onslaught of thousands of tanks, supported as these were by sweeping majorities in the air? Already on June the 4th Mr. Churchill had complained that the Royal Air Force had been outnumbered by four to one. With its bases gone, it could no longer operate freely: and the French Air Force had always been pitifully small. In these circumstances, France might show pluck, but she could hardly foster hope.

Meanwhile the voice of the country was rising louder. It was because of the deepening distrust of the forces of the Right that votes had been first withheld from M. Daladier: as a man of property (for he had chain stores in Mexico), M. Reynaud next appeared to represent a more Conservative view; but he was not a practising Catholic, on the contrary, he was closely linked with the Daladier connection. During these disastrous weeks Mandel had added to the confusion: as the new Minister of the Interior, this man was responsible for the hideous confusion of the French roads, and the vain flights of refugees which had embarrassed every movement of the armies. Like M. Reynaud, he had voiced the cry for 'total war' which for a France that was unready had the significance of a knell, and which had sent thousands of young men to un-availing death. M. Mandel owed his phenomenal rise as a

young man to the sudden favour of Clemenceau and to the uncompromising application of that policy which Churchill had deprecated, and which had enabled Hitler to accomplish his crusade of revenge. To Mandel, Reynaud now added the Freemason Delbos, who had thrown himself so eagerly into alliance with Russia, into quarrel with Italy. Such appointments could only shake the confidence of Pétain and Weygand, who were asked to perform the impossible, and who found that the British Army, owing to movements not supported by their military colleagues, was no longer of the slightest advantage.¹ Half a million Belgians with all their accoutrements had been captured; 400,000 Britishers, and over 100,000 Frenchmen, at the sacrifice of a thousand guns, of hundreds of tanks, of all their rifles and all their ammunition, had disappeared from the scene of war. Mr. Churchill had voiced the feeling of the French commanders when he had said in the House of Commons that 'Wars were not won by evacuations.' The help that remained, like that which had been withdrawn, was gallantly proffered; but it could avail little. By June the 10th, the French resistance was broken under berserk onslaught which pierced the line in the west, and sent German tanks careering through Normandy. On that day, Italy declared war. And the Prime Minister, this time accompanied by Mr. Eden, and his military chief, went once again on June the 11th across the Channel to take counsel with the French and their despair.

Never in all the changes and chances of his life had Winston Churchill known a more grievous time than this. For the next morning General Weygand announced that further war was vain. He could not hold Paris more than a day or two longer. The French, with their forces pierced and crushed, their

¹ A great cause of embarrassment was that General Gamelin had not advised the British of the collapse at Sedan and the consequent need of retreat.

people in flight, their roads one long confusion, must make what terms they could. In these circumstances the Prime Minister had to decide whether he would release the French from their alliance, and if so on what terms.¹ This was the problem which he had now to discuss with the French authorities.

In view of the news which Weygand had broken to them, further resistance could not be considered. The only question was the terms of their surrender. Churchill naturally insisted that the four hundred German airmen who had been shot down in France, some by British prowess, should not be released to fight again. He asked also for the French Air Force and the French Navy. He urged that the war should be continued in the French Colonies, which were vital to his strategic plans.

In everything which suggested defiance, he had the support of Reynaud and Mandel. It was suggested that Mr. Churchill should attend the meeting of the Cabinet on June the 13th, and in the hope of seeing him this Cabinet waited from three till five that afternoon. Meanwhile in that gracious Touraine with the fair river, her green trees and abundant lawns, the Prime Minister spent bitter hours. He learnt from Reynaud and Mandel that though they themselves would sacrifice all France to the invader while they fought from across the seas, such a view was treason to the generals, who trusted neither Jew nor Radical, nor *Anglais*. The generals thought of other things: they thought of the dangers of Communism, of that sacred soil of France, of her people, of her place in the councils of Europe. Since they had indeed to make what terms they could, it was of course impossible for them to hand over German prisoners to British control.² On such terms, such a German as Hitler could never grant an armistice, nor allow

¹ *The Times*, 26 June, 5d

² Four hundred German airmen were afterwards shot down over England in a single day.

an inch of French soil to remain intact. Reynaud and Mandel having put their views before the Prime Minister, dissuaded him from discussing his proposals with those who disagreed.¹ He left for England without meeting the generals again, or gauging the full reactions of French opinion, with which the Embassy was perforce losing touch, but which had turned apparently from an England which had accepted both at a moment fatal for France, after having refused it when victory was easy.

4

Every subsequent day of delay made the French collapse more manifest and more calamitous. The generals, incensed with the delays of Ministers whose policies they had always distrusted, decided to expel them from the Government. Reynaud fled to the Riviera, and Mandel to Africa. Daladier was already a broken man. And in these circumstances, retaining still the gravity, the orderliness and the logical sequence of twenty years earlier, Pétain assumed absolute authority over France, to win from the Germans what terms he could. Although 2,000,000 Frenchmen were prisoners in Germany, he demanded that the French Navy and Air Force should remain intact, and that he should exercise authority over the France not yet occupied while the Germans took the whole western coast from Dunkerque to Fontarabìa. By June the 18th, which was a hundred and twenty-five years after Waterloo, France was as naked to her enemies as when the broken battalions of Napoleon were fleeing after the last charge.

On that day in yet another great speech to the House of Commons, repeated in the evening to the nation, the Prime Minister announced his intention to fight on indomitable, confident in his country's power to resist the invaders. He spoke with warmth and fervour of the gallantry of the airmen, and

¹ *The Times*, 26 June, 5d.

their power to direct the issues of history. Never, he said later, had fate given it to so few to do such great things for so many.

But the prospect which he had now to survey was as wholly altered as a scene over which has passed the flood which sweeps away the landmarks and houses of generations and teaches an ancient river to flow in new channels. Not only had France collapsed, but she was changed. A different policy, a different outlook, different standards and different men reversed the recent directions. They rejected the philosophy of the French Revolution. France in her disillusionment had turned sharply to the right. Everything associated with her ruin stank in the nostrils like dung. She denounced as a snare democracy and all its appurtenances, including her alliance with parliamentary Britain. She had changed the meaning of 'brotherhood and freedom' by exchanging the word 'equality' for 'hierarchy' and 'service'. From henceforth she, with all Europe, was united in the aim to reach by other means to other ends.

But her collapse meant more than that. It carried with it the neutralization of Morocco, of Algiers, of Tunis and of Syria—Syria, in which under Weygand and Mittelhauser was gathered the decisive arm of the Near East. It made Italy mistress of the Mediterranean. Britain's lines of navigation through that central sea had already been severed by the guns which shoot from Sicily and the adjacent island of Pantellaria. With France eliminated, Italy, supported and impelled, as she was, by the colossal momentum of Germany, was free to manoeuvre in Libya and to threaten the Levant. The Suez Canal, which opened the avenue to India, the pipes which brought petrol over the desert to Damascus and round Hermon to the port of Galilee, with the imperial pivots of Palestine and Egypt, designed to ensure for Britain the power of the air, seemed cut off from effective reinforcements, all endangered together. Such were the dire misfortunes which in the first six weeks of

his rule the supreme director of the British Empire at war had to affront; they set at naught the memory of a lifetime; they tore away the traditionary hawsers and anchors on which the vessels of British strategy and principle lay moored in the roadsteads of history. These vessels drove before the roar of wind over the bellying waters: and though the hearts of others might melt away because of the trouble, though they might stagger like a drunken man, or drive devious in the lack of stars, it was the task of the new admiral so to master the elements as to bring his squadron into still waters of an unaccustomed inlet till the convoy could set out to carry other merchandise on other voyages when the season of storms had passed.

5

The task, therefore, which awaits Winston Churchill in the meridian of his power is not independent of ordeal by battle: but it demands a leadership not more of dauntless will than of a thought as consistent and informed as his. We live in the age which has manifested the inherent subjection of victory to the end and aim of the conqueror. It was a theme of Saint Augustine when he tried to trace the significance of history in the *City of God*. Victories, he wrote, come bloody, deadly, vain if men set out to be conquerors of the world, when in reality they are the slaves of vice; when if they conquer they betray themselves, regarding victory as an end in itself.¹ Mr. Churchill has also expressed the disaster which befell the victorious Allies because they lacked consistent aim. 'War spells nothing but toil, waste, sorrow and torment to the vast mass of ordinary folk in every land.' And yet they could not stop it because they had no plan.²

Churchill himself saw the Allies making the same error: 'the Allies had in the space of a few years thrown away the immense sacrifices and suffering of the four years of war. The

¹ *City of God*, XV, p. 4.

² *Step by Step*, p. 37.

victors had already become the vanquished.¹ No prosperity, no settlement had been attained, only continued hunger: higher taxes, greater waste of effort; and intenser fear.

What was the reason? As Mr. Churchill defined it, it was first of all Demos. The vote of the people had prevented the leaders giving just and reasonable terms. The truth was that democracy was the reaction of the people to certain organizations of propaganda: there were the newspapers, there was the patriotic appeal, there was the party appeal. 'So many various odd and unwritten processes are interposed between the elector and the assembly,' said Mr. Churchill, 'and that assembly is subjected to so much extraneous pressure,'² that parliamentary government is not really the voice of the people. And this parliamentary government under the leadership of MacDonald had been misled into compromise with Bolshevism, and a doctrine that the British Empire should live to itself. It was, in any case, at peace neither with Europe nor with itself.

'As the history of States is generally written,' once said Macaulay, 'the greatest and most momentous revolutions seem to come upon them like supernatural inflictions, without warning and without cause. But the fact is that such revolutions are almost always the consequences of moral changes, which have gradually passed, on the mass of the community, and which originally proceeded as their progress is indicated.'³ To attempt to write of the causes of these wars within the last year or two when one does not hold full account of the injustice and muddle which preceded them is, in Macaulay's simile, like writing on the symptoms of a disease only as they show in a patient who is already too ill to cure. The truth is that until Britain is in a secure and happy relation to a secure and happy Europe, every dominion, every colony,

¹ *Aftermath*, p. 455.

² *Thoughts and Adventures*, p. 230.

³ Macaulay, *Essay on History*, penultimate paragraph.

every protectorate and mandate are in danger; without that victory is meaningless; without that there can be no security anywhere, and no economy can prosper. The cause of Britain is always inseparable from the welfare of the world.

In the world of to-day welfare is interdependent: it is an exchange no less of ideas than it is of commerce. Races and nations interlock. But the adjustments of their interaction will fail unless there is a common respect for the principles of justice. Justice is a part of a moral order, and this, being spiritual, implies religion. Such is the simple argument which underlies Mr. Churchill's statement that we fight for a Christian civilization, and which plainly owes much to the exalted views of Lord Halifax. It needs a common principle, a common centre, a sense of working together as the glands and tissues of a body work together with its nerves and blood, for this is indeed a common well-being. All these come together with Christianity; for Christianity means a Church.

Mr. Churchill therefore gives leadership to the British Empire that it, in turn, should give leadership to the world. All leadership means self-sacrifice. It is the merging of one powerful intelligence and will in the good of those who are led. It was there that the Allies failed in 1919; it is there that, after years of experience, Mr. Churchill should now succeed.

6

History has marked him out for such a part as this. All his life he has been engaged against three evils: the one is nationalism; the other is socialism; the third is democratic control of the economic system and foreign affairs. Nationalism, whether militarist or economic, is the organization of power to the exclusion of those on whom it depends for its advantages; socialism is the organization of communities on false theories of equality that fetter and gag the freedom of

man's spirit, and rob all of their share in nobility and tradition. Why does Mr. Churchill differ from socialism? 'Socialism seeks to pull down wealth, liberalism seeks to raise up poverty. Socialism would destroy private interests, liberalism would preserve private interests in the only way in which they can be safely and justly preserved, namely, by reconciling them with public right. Socialism would kill enterprise. Liberalism would rescue enterprise from the trammels of privilege and preference. Socialism assails the pre-eminence of the individual. Liberalism seeks to build up the minimum standard for the mass. Socialism exalts the rule, Liberalism exalts the man. Socialism attacks capital, Liberalism attacks monopoly.'¹ And when we look closer at socialism, we see that it is always state socialism; in other words it is National Socialism. It leaves no scope for those like Mr. Churchill who both inherit and attain in order to work, to inspire, and to share. It is not therefore by an accident that at a great crisis he finds himself engaged against national socialism. It is inherent in the nature and constitution of his inheritance, his tradition and his instinct.

But the countries against which Mr. Churchill is engaged do not deny the principle of leadership. Quite the contrary. Their trouble is that they identify it with compulsion and militarism: and because of their compulsion and menace, the new systems of Germany and Italy have been hated by those who vaunted socialism. But this menace, this militarism, is certainly not inherent in the Italian nature; and it cannot carry Germany far. It is in fact part of a system of aggression which is the symptom of something lacking, not merely in their ethics, but in their economic systems.

For both of these German deficiencies the Western Powers are largely to blame. Every concession they have granted in

¹ Speech at Dundee, May 1908. *Liberalism and Free Trade* (Preface).

the last twenty years was given not out of constructive generosity, but grudgingly, because Germany, by ruse or violence, forced their hands. Such ruses and such violence, if continued, will paralyse the systems of life and spread ruin. But would that ruse and violence have been there if Mr. Churchill had had his way; if the Allies had foreseen either the just demands of a hungry people, or the dangers of a ruler exploiting their indignation for aggressive purposes? If that was true of our former enemy, Germany, it was still truer of our former ally, Italy. She obtained in the Old World much; but nowhere either those markets, nor those sources of raw material which were all the more essential to her when, in the sequence of victory, she found her field for emigration locked against her.

Militarism and aggression are the eruptions caused by impoverished blood. We cannot cure them by surface poultices. We must enrich the blood stream.

The fault of 1919 was not that it coerced the Prussian element in Germany: to coerce that was well—and better still to have kept the whiphand in 1936. But to do those, it was necessary to do more: to remember that men live by interdependence. The model for the new Europe is that which Versailles threw away: it is the composite Empire grouped around Vienna. This was free from that obsession of race which has made this second war a contest between two phases of an obsolete idea.

Such interdependence, such co-operation cannot at once be worked out in a federal scheme. It cannot spring armed, like the goddess of Wisdom, from the head of an omnipotent thinker. It will need adjustments—economic, national, ideal, religious—in the course of years. But what is needed now is to turn back to those studies of Mr. Churchill which, by embodying it, will inaugurate it.

What is the alternative? It is to continue a criss-cross of air raids which either side can impede, but neither prevent: and it

is to aim at throwing on Hitler the responsibility for the starvation of Europe. His breaches of engagements, his acts of violence can be defended by no tribunal: but it must never be forgotten that his breaches of the law were preceded by a neglect by others of the very principle of justice. For 'justice is not what my lawyer tells me I may do,' wrote Burke, as to how England should deal with menacing Americans, 'but what humanity, reason and justice tell me I ought to do.' In short Christendom is what counts, or victory is vain.

7

This then is the double aim of the Prime Minister: it is to wage war with all our might, yes—for who could hand over his land to an invader; who could sue for mercy to one who, like Hitler, has closed his ear to every appeal of constructive settlement made either by Mr. Churchill himself or by Mr. Chamberlain? But at the same time it is to think out the essentials of this plan of generous leadership for Europe. It is to show that without this there can be no safety either for Britain or her Empire.

Not least, we must keep clear the dread alternative which he has seen extending its menace for twenty years. We must see that through all Europe, but centred upon Russia, is a force which aims at general disintegration; which manœuvrèd tirelessly for this war; which as an infernal power seems to profit from the exhaustion of her neighbours, and which at the same time sees in war the best trick for extending her annihilating principles. If that is what is happening, it is a more sinister danger than was ever threatened by Hitler. And if he continues both to ignore it and to further it by the mad impulses of his ambition and his revenge, we need still more careful forethought, still more generous and illumined leadership to take counsel with every neutral, that all may act

together and act at once. On the one side is the danger of the whole organism of Europe being laid low with pernicious anaemia, and naked to a malignant felon; but on the other is the prospect of a Europe freed from armaments and tariffs for an interaction in the order of unity which would give her and all this dusky Empire,¹ and the Americas, a felicity such as they have never dreamed.

Mr. Churchill, as a constitutionalist, consistently affronts a new system: a system compounded on the old absolute Czarist State, and of revolution against it; an Asiatized and despotic system; a system of clanking militarism; a system of State Socialism, making much of equality, and nothing of liberty. But when revolutions come, they leave something behind, and if there is a soul of goodness in things evil—in socialism, whether National Socialism or Fascism or British socialism—there is a residue of continuous authority, of provision for the masses, of the sense of unity in the whole State, of the discipline and effort of all for a common end—in a word a plan and pattern. And all these explain why, in whole nations, people acquiesce in these systems, and even choose them. For democracy can vote itself totalitarian overnight. Co-ordination and control, then, are now as international as commerce and credit. But peace means more than a right order in foreign affairs. There must be three changes without which peace will mean nothing: a balance of the field against the factory, so that men will have a surer hold of necessities, and have more fresh food. The second is a completer architecture, so that every building, every village and every town will offer to all a sense of order, space, and beauty.

And thirdly the credit system will need to be adapted to a country's resources, not to its juggling with the currency: for a country's wealth is not in its vaults but in the earth—its

¹ The proportion of white to coloured people in the British Empire is 1 to 6.

capacity to provide for its needs and to exercise its virtues and its soul.

Finally, therefore, Christianity is for Christendom. It seeks for justice no more within the framework of States than among them. Of all Æsop's animals it likes least the dog in the manger. It seeks for a balance and a sharing in opportunities: it is a commerce not only of merchandise but of ideas in the freest exchange possible according to the principles and order of a common justice and a common law. It looks at all imperial opportunities as something to be shared among nations in a brotherhood of justice and peace. It faces the manifest truth that in no other way now can there be an empire, or a victory.

There is then, as Mr. Churchill said in his first great speech in the House of Commons, a *moral force*. If both sides will recognize a moral authority in Europe, if nations will negotiate honestly where for twenty years victors greedily intrigued, if there is thought for the good of peoples rather than for the prestige of the negotiators—and in a Christian civilization, all these desired things come in a temper of suavity and leisure—then this war may well issue in an amplitude and felicity such as Europe has never known. 'The dull grey clouds under which millions of our countrymen are monotonously toiling will break and melt and vanish for ever in the sunshine of a new and nobler age.'¹ Such is the radiant hope which the career and principles of Winston Churchill—not without some fruits from the aims and philosophies of his enemies—set before us, as his victory.

As a man of contrasts but not of contradictions Mr. Churchill proudly avows himself a son of England. He has been an Englishman rather than a European, and because an English-

¹ Speech at Dundee, May 1908.

man, not a doctrinaire but a constitutionalist. A constitutionalist would guide and inform the movement of opinion which gives a majority by contributions from inherited fortune, from experience and from distinguished gifts. He does not seek a final pact or formula any more than he wishes to ordain everything himself; for he realizes that variety completes the world, that new occasions teach new duties, and that conservation is ensured only by change. Though a conservative Mr. Churchill has always been eager for reform.

Yet for the betterment of things, he trusts less to theories than to the ways of life, knowing that perfection is not easily found in this precarious world.

If all these things are true, who would ask that a particular consummation either in war, or in settlement, should do everything? The world is not cast in a fixed mould. Its orders change. Better to leave it to time, to wisdom, to the remedies of Nature—and to heavenly grace—gradually to restore, to resurgent nations not only the felicity they have abandoned, but the power to store their palaces with a plenteousness richer, wider, than ever yet.

In his ripened years, this incomparable minister leads a country of which he is the embodiment, because he is her genius and her lamp. His career has voiced her instincts. If he championed Geneva, it was to point not only to the majesty of law, but to the solidarity of diplomacy. Diplomacy is to-day our dictator. For business is harnessed by cartels, tariffs, quotas, credits and control to governments, and this makes our policies dependent on those of other countries. Each individual, therefore, is in danger till our government works as a friend with other governments. Yet we should not trust all our industry and trade to governments, for enterprise must be as wide as man's mind, and trade as full as the world is of riches; to be full it must be free. So the younger Churchill who argued for free trade had the right instinct there also.

*Men must never leave to the State what they can do better themselves. The intercourse of both thoughts and things must be as full and free as decency allows. We need justice, certainly, to keep money-making from its own haste and its own excess. We need those state organisms Mr. Churchill inaugurated when, thirty years ago, he took thought

*How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings of the poor,
How gain in life, as life advances,
Valour and charity more and more.*

But even when the State does organize, let it leave men free, therefore, for valour and charity: leave them also art and leisure: for games and play remind us not only that we enjoy the exercise of skill, but that rivalry is a convention, and much of life a dream.

Fittingly, therefore, Winston Churchill rose from the bridge table to dispose for war the pulsing efficiency of the Royal Navy. He cultivates his diversions with ardour, diversions as different as gardening is from history, and painting from polo. His high seriousness in politics never outsoars the jest. He combines his glowing enjoyment of the pomps and indulgences of the world with obeisance to duty, the Bible, and even at times 'praying long and earnestly'. Now vehement, imperious and high, now genial and winning, happy in energy and rule, sad when his faculties are idle, his moods circle the contrasts of a full man.

His sympathies have reconciled him to opposing camps. He has been both the lancer and the liberal, both the reformer and the courtier, both the sportsman and the sybarite, both the patrician and the artist. As in the words of Sir Ian Hamilton, he combines push with persuasiveness, so, firm and yet resilient, he combines American enterprise with British character, and ambition with generosity. He alternates imperiousness

with joviality and hastiness with patience. His crowded and tenacious memory never clogs his fertility, initiative and surprise. His long and forceful volubility alternates with occasional spells of silence: but never sags into chatter. Nor does he confuse exuberance with style. He has 'amazing flashes of energizing brilliance'—as Mr. H. A. L. Fisher once wrote to Lady D'Abernon—brilliance which pours on like a flooded torrent, yet is harnessed by will power. His torrential patriotism never shakes the rock of his justice. He strained every nerve for victory only to proclaim it vain, because misused; even while he defers to democracy he doubts it; and at the same time he rides it, as an eagle rides and dallies with the wind blowing against him. Grounded in principles of concord and conciliation, he is yet the indomitable leader in arms. He lives apart in a realm of his own making, encompassed by the splendours of his traditions, his taste and his genius: yet he is ready to make all his countrymen his comrades. He cultivates a formal eloquence, yet speaks at will the simple words that meet the people's mood: and so he points us all down the same road to home; and who can wonder that the Empire has taken him at last to its heart like the cheering soldiers who brought tears to his eyes in the last war, when they greeted him in France with cries of 'Good old Winston!'

Here is no great Churchman, living like Lord Halifax in daily communion with the unseen; no ascetic idealist; no fanatic or paragon such as Britishers detest—but no intriguer either, nor supplanter. If he rose to the central station of command, he rose by open means and his unrivalled qualities. If some have detected faults, such faults, as Lady Lytton suggested, only veil his golden virtues. His faculty to ride the turbulence of storm, and govern in a London noisy with the rattle and uproar of big guns while the engines of death send hell from heaven, he owes to a courage that can affront danger as steadfastly as his truthfulness maintains the country's

sanity. He keeps scrupulous faith with fact; hope and imagination while they enrich his resourcefulness, and nerve his valour, never beguile him to boasting. He never lays aside or fumbles with the make-weights of justice, knowing what the Great Avenger demands of those, who when they 'were strong, hurled insults at starving men. With 'one man's plain truth to manhood', he has told democracies how little he can trust them with sweeping victory.¹ He wants freedom and the parliamentary system, but he warns us that it fails when parties disagree on the things that really matter. If he mistrusts dictatorships, he shares with them the conviction that only authorities can decide the state's relation to business and finance. While pressing both defence and attack, he never forgets the perils of which he first warned parliament—that 'A European war can end only in the ruin of the vanquished and the scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors.' After risking his life and expending all his powers in the last war, he summed it up—at least in so far as it replaced Christianity and tradition by Bolshevism—as resulting in death and being 'the loosening upon mankind of incomparably the most frightful disaster since the collapse of the Roman Empire before the barbarians'.²

In his patriotism, there is none of the common poison; for some scoundrels have changed it from a virtue to a curse. He never through slovenliness allows war to disrupt society and its standards, and still less, through craft, aims that it should drive an embittered people to revolt.

He is superbly suited for authority in war, because while he inspires resistance, and defies defeat, he knows also how to negotiate when the time is ripe. His swift mind pierces the deep secrets of events and reduces complex issues to their simplest terms. Like his American mother, he feels the future; and he is the first to understand when war changes from the

¹ *World Crisis*, p. 96.

² *Eastern Front*, p. 82.

kind of clash that history has known under the name to a competition in exploiting engines and invention, from engagement to evasion, and so to a tournament of ruin.

Here then is the man who is the true arm and burgonet of Britain because he is the just man; the wise man; the man of heart and tears who has much to love, and finds in feeling the strength that holds him high. A mind so swift and rich, a type so full is the gift not merely of effort and learning and experience, but of race and privilege and command, of life and time.

He lifts our hearts above equality to enjoy admiring; and whom we enjoy admiring we may follow loyally, while among many troubled peoples a kindred hope leads on from frightfulness and destruction to the order and honour of peace. That peace we would have been enjoying for twenty years already, if we had been wise in time to listen to Mr. Churchill, who yet when war is forced upon us wages it with resolution as strong as his determination for magnanimity in victory, his goodwill to mankind, his plans for better things when as the time of chastisement draws towards its end, men answer to his counsels and appraise his foresight.

Index

- Actaeon, 257
Addison, Rt. Hon. C., 126 *n.*
Akbar, 103
Alba, Duke of, 15
Alexander, King of Greece, 207
Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V., 280
Alfonso, King, 240, 248
Amery, Rt. Hon. L. S., 25, 42, 55, 93, 188
Angell, Sir Norman, 64
Astor, Viscountess, 259
Asquith, H. H., 81, 92-4, 98-9, 111, 114, 115 *n.*, 122-3, 127, 128, 129-31, 132, 146, 158
Ataturk, President, 178, 180, 242
Augustine, St., 291

Bacon, Sir R., 121 *n.*, 127 *n.*, 138 *n.*
Baldwin, Earl, 184, 188, 192, 227, 231, 236, 244-5
Balfour, Earl of, 128, 140, 142, 146, 177, 188, 191, 202
Ballin, A., 104
Barthou, 230
Battenberg, Prince Louis of, 99
Beaconsfield, Earl of, 18, 67
Beatty, Earl, 40
Beaverbrook, Viscount, 104 *n.*, 129 *n.*, 146
Belisarius, 123

Benedict XV, Pope, 167-8
Beresford, Lord Charles, 97
Beresford, Lord William, 33
Bieberstein, Baron Marschall von, 123
Birdwood, F.M. Lord, 173
Birkenhead, 1st Earl of, 129, 131 *n.*, 138, 146, 176-7, 188, 195
Bismarck, Prince, 13, 28, 282
Blood, Sir Bindon, 33
Bolitho, Mr. Hector, 246
Bolshevism, 84, 178-9, 184, 186, 205, 212-13, 218-19, 226, 250, 257-9
Bonham-Carter, Lady Violet, 94
Borthwick, Sir Algernon, 41, 49
Botha, Louis, 43
Bowles, T. G., 112, 115
Bradford, Bishop of, 244
Bridgeman, Sir Francis, 99
Bridges, Sir Edward, 262-3
Briggs, Admiral, 99
Brindle, Bishop, 50
Bronstein, *see* Trotsky
Brodrick, Sir John, 63, 66
Bruening, 225
Buller, Sir Redvers, 42-3, 49-50
Burke, Edmund, 65, 199, 203, 259, 296
Byng, Lord, 50-51, 156, 157

Carl, Emperor of Austria, 156
 Cassel, Sir E., 70
 Castlenau, 151
 Cavan, Earl of, 133, 164
 Cave, Viscount, 188
 Cecil, Lord Hugh, 66
 Chamberlain, Sir Austen, 99 *n.*,
 104 *n.*, 177, 188, 236
 Joseph, 42, 67, 72, 75, 80,
 184
 Rt. Hon. Neville, 148, 188,
 252-6, 258-9, 266, 268,
 278-80, 296
 Chatfield, Lord, 268-9, 270,
 271-2
 Churchill, Arabella, 15, 247
 Lady Gwendeline, 63, 140
 John, *see* Marlborough, 1st
 Duke
 Mr. John, 50, 63
 Lord Randolph, 14-19, 22-3,
 26-8, 50, 63, 64, 75, 77,
 78, 80
 Lady Randolph, 14-19, 23-4,
 30-1, 50, 57, 189, 302
 Mr. Randolph, 88
 Mr. Winston, the American,
 71
 Rt. Hon. Winston,
 born at Blenheim, 18
 a troublesome child, 19
 sent to Ascot, 20-2
 still naughty at Brighton, 22
 at Harrow, 24-6
 at Sandhurst, 26-7
 as Hussar at Cuba, 30
 in India, 32-5
 in the Sudan, 36-40
 in Natal, 41-3
 in the Transvaal, 44-8
 still in South Africa, 49-53
 his excitability and ambition,
 20, 50

Churchill, Rt. Hon. Winston—
 contd.
 combined with fairness and
 generosity, 55-6, 59-62
 enters Parliament, 57-8
 connections with peerage, 63
 opposes idea of European
 War, 63-6
 a free trader, 67, 71-4
 his appearance, 19, 68-9, 70,
 239
 urges social reform, 84-6
 marries, 88
 accepts Admiralty, 93-6
 reforms Admiralty, 97-100
 admires Lord Fisher, 97-8,
 100-1
 mobilizes Fleet, 104
 his mind looks two ways,
 107-8
 his conciliation, 109, 176-8,
 183-5, 248
 his struggle to direct, 111
 his administration attacked,
 112, 115, 117
 he goes to Antwerp, 113-15
 he claims success, 120
 eager for Dardanelles, 122-31
 joins Guards, 133-5
 commands Scots Fusiliers,
 135-8
 returns to London, 139-40
 learns to paint, 140-1, 190-1
 active as a journalist, 142-6,
 222-37
 opposed by Tories, 146-8
 Minister of Munitions, 149-65
 magnanimous in victory, 170-
 72, 175-6, 179-80, 248-50
 Secretary for War, 177
 foresees Moscow-Berlin dan-
 ger, 179-80
 loses Dundee, 181

Churchill, Rt. Hon. Winston—
contd.

 fights Abbey-division, 187

 joins Tory Party, 188

 inherits fortune, 189

 Chancellor of the Exchequer,
 192-202

 his literary style, 203-8, 210-
 11

 his humour, 208-9

 his philosophy of history,
 212-21

 criticizes socialists, 224-5

 foresees German danger,
 225-30

 supports Hoare-Laval under-
 standing, 232

 warns England vehemently
 about Rhine, 234-8

 his writing, 238-9

 he supports Mrs. Simpson,
 242, 244-6

 repeats his warnings, 250-6

 reasons with Hitler, 257

 beguiled by Bolsheviks, 258-63
 speaks soberly in Parlia-
 ment, 267

 re-enters Cabinet, 268-73

 directs Admiralty, 274-9

 becomes Prime Minister, 280
 faces disaster across Channel,
 284-9

 his political theory, 293-8

 personality and genius, 299-
 303

Clemenceau, 150, 154, 155, 157,
 160-1, 171 *n.*, 237

Cleveland, Duchess of, 15, 247

Clive, Robert, 65

Connaught, H.R.H. Duke of, 15

Conservatism, 23, 63-4, 65-6,
 73, 91, 111, 183, 185, 187-
 8, 192-6, 198-9, 268-70

Constantine, 123

Cradock, Sir C., 116

Creighton, Mandell, 16, 22

Croft, Lord, 280

Cromer, 1st Earl of, 37, 40-41

Curzon, Marquess of, 57, 128,
 177, 179 *n.*, 181

D'Abernon, Lord and Lady,
 3, 301

Daladier, 273, 289

D'Alenson, Col., 150

Dallolio, Gen., 155

Darwin, 33

Delbos, 233, 287

Democracy, 23, 63-4, 107, 108,
 171, 173, 184, 209, 228,
 231-2, 251-2, 261, 283,
 292

Denikin, 178

de Robeck, Admiral, 123, 126

Devonshire, Duke of, 67

Dill, Sir John, 285

Disraeli, *see* Beaconsfield

Duff Cooper, Rt. Hon. A., 256

Duval, 283

Eden, Rt. Hon. A., 227, 231,
 234-7, 253, 284-5, 287

Edward VII, King, 69, 93

Edward VIII, King, *see* Windsor

Elibank, Viscount, 187

Emeny, Brooks, 250 *n.*

Enver Pasha, 123

Everest, Mrs., 20-1, 24, 32, 73

Feiling, Mr. K. G., 204

Fisher, H. A. L., 177, 301

Fisher, Lord, 97-8, 100-1, 110,
 119-20, 121-8, 131, 138,
 140, 145, 150, 154

Foch, 151, 157, 158-60, 163,
 164

- Forster, Arnold, 66
 Fortescue, Sir John, 21 *n.*, 142
 French, Sir John, 129, 132
 Frewen, Moreton, 14, 15

 Gamelin, 285, 287 *n.*
 Garibaldi, 281
 George V, King of England, 240, 243
 George VI, King of England, 246
 George II, King of Greece, 244
 George, Rt. Hon. D. Lloyd, 75, 84, 109, 128-9, 146-8, 169, 170, 177-8, 179-81, 193 *n.*, 203, 204, 207, 209
 Gladstone, W. E., 22, 28, 178
 Godley, Sir Alexander, 162
 Goebbels, 248
 Gooch, Dr. G. P., 213
 Gordon, Charles, 37
 Gouraud, 163
 Goya, 202
 Greenwood, 278
 Grey, Lord, of Fallodon, 93, 104, 113
 Grippenbergh, M. Georges de, 186 *n.*

 Haig, Earl, 154, 156, 157, 160, 162
 Haile Selassie, 230
 Hailsham, Viscount, 188
 Haldane, Sir Aylmer, 34, 42-5
 Haldane, Viscount, 93-6
 Halifax, Viscount, 272, 280, 293, 301
 Hamilton, Lord George, 67
 Hamilton, Sir Ian, 34, 52, 123, 300
 Hankey, Lord, 115, 122, 123, 142, 272
 Harrington, Sir C., 180

 Hastings, Warren, 65
 Headlam-Morley, 92 *n.*
 Henderson, 146
 Henderson, Sir N., 256 *n.*, 259 *n.*
 Hitler, 201, 225, 228, 234, 236, 246-8, 256, 258-9, 262, 265, 270, 277, 296
 Hoare, Sir S., 88
 Hoover, Mr. Herbert, 196-7
 Hore-Belisha, Rt. Hon. L., 272, 276
 Howard, John, 47-8
 Howe, Countess, 63

 Ironside, Sir E., 265

 Jellicoe, Earl, 104
 Jerome, Leonard, 2, 54, 62
 Jerome, Mrs., 1
 Joffre, 163
 Joynson-Hicks, 188

 Keyes, Sir R., 154
 Keynes, M. J. M., 193-4
 Kitchener, Earl, 36-9, 41, 57, 67, 113, 114, 115, 116 *n.*, 125, 129, 131, 133, 142
 Koltschak, 178
 Krivitski, 258
 Kruger, 59

 Lansdowne, Marquess of, 167
 Lautré, 51
 Laval, 231-2
 Lavery, Mr. John, 141
 Law, A. Bonar, 146-8
 League of Nations, 229, 231, 233, 299
 Leigh, Austen, 16
 Lenin, 204-5, 219, 230
 Leslie, Sir John, 14, 15

- Liberalism, 58-9, 67, 74-80,
 84-6, 90, 91, 131, 181,
 183, 185, 198-9, 294
 Londonderry, Marquess of, 228
 Loucheur, 154, 157
 Ludendorff, 145, 148-9, 163
 Lyttelton, Alfred, 81
 Lytton, Countess of, 62, 301

 Macaulay, Lord, 26, 203, 206,
 292
 MacDonald, J. Ramsay, 201,
 222-4, 225, 292
 Mahdi, 37-40, 41, 55
 Malakand Field Force, 33-6
 Malcolm, Sir Ian, 66
 Malthus, 33
 Mandel, 285-6, 288, 289
 Mangin, 149-50, 163
 Marlborough, 1st Duke of, 1, 3,
 131, 158, 209
 7th Duke of, 17, 18
 8th Duke of, 18
 9th Duke of, 31, 52-3, 176
 Marriott, Sir John, 315 *n.*
 Marschall, *see* Bieberstein
 Marsh, Sir E., 24 *n.*, 141 *n.*
 Metternich, Prince Richard, 13
 Middleton, *see* Brodrick
 Milner, Viscount, 56, 146
 Mittelhauser, 290
 Montague, E. S., 177
 Moore, Eva, 22
 Morley, Viscount, 82-3, 203
 Mottistone, Lord, 66, 176
 Muggeridge, Mr. M., 239 *n.*
 Murray, Hon Gideon, 87
 Mussolini, 195-6, 198-9, 226,
 233, 236, 248, 256
Mustafa Kemal, *see* Atatürk

 Napoleon III, 1, 84, 282
 Newbury, John, 103

 Nicholson, General, 34, 187
 Nicolson, Hon. Harold, 181 *n.*
 Niemeyer, Sir O., 192
 Nivelle, 149-50
 Northumberland, Duke of, *see*
 Percy.

 Oldham, 56, 57
 Oliver, Mr. V., 88
 Oman, Sir C., 145 *n.*
 Omdurman, 38-40
 Orpen, Sir William, 141
 Oxford, 1st Earl, *see* Asquith

 Page-Croft, *see* Croft, Lord
 Pakenham, Sir W., 99
 Pascal, 263
 Percy, Earl, 66
 Percy, Lord Eustace, 188
 Pétain, Marshal, 151-4, 157,
 161, 162, 184, 285, 287
 'Peter the Painter', 86-8
 Pigou, A. C., 192
 Pingaud, 217 *n.*
 Poincaré, 180-1
 Prirzzip, 201

 Ramsey, Lord de, 63
 Rawlinson, Lord, 114, 156,
 160
 Repington, Col., 23 *n.*, 142,
 154 *n.*, 157, 217
 Reynaud, 254, 275-6, 277, 283,
 289
 Ritchie, Lord, 67
River War, 36-41
 Roberts, Earl, 50, 52
 Robertson, Sir W., 154, 155
 Ronaldshay, *see* Zetland
 Roosevelt, President, 220
 Rosebery, 9th Earl of, 22, 29,
 75-7, 79-80
 Roxburghe, Duchess of, 63

- Salisbury, Marquess of, 28, 29,
31, 33, 63, 64
Sandys, Mr. Duncan, 88
Sargent, 37
Sarrail, 150, 217
Savinkov, 207
Savrola, 20 n., 24 n., 36, 42 n.,
54 n., 55, 66
Sencourt, 103, 230 n., 249 n.
Simon, Viscount, 195, 272
Simonds, Frank H.; 250
Simpson, Mrs., *see* Windsor
Sixte, Prince de Bourbon, 156
Smigly-Rydz, 270
Smith, *see* Birkenhead
Socialism, 224-5, 278-9, 294,
297
Spee, Graf von, 116-9
Stalin, 218, 226, 258-9, 262
Stanley, Sir Arthur, 66
Stanley, Rt. Hon. O., 276
Steel-Maitland, 188
Steevens, G. W., 54, 55
Tonga, Queen of, 273
Trotzky, 218
Tweedmouth, Lady, 63
Vachell, H. A., 26
Vane-Tempest, Lord H., 188
Venizelos, 178
Virgil, 56
'Watchman', quoted, 247 n.
Welldon, Bishop, 24
Wellington, 1st Duke of, 13
Westminster, Duke of, 157,
176
Weygand, 158, 283, 287, 290
Wilde, Oscar, 23
William II, Emperor, 240
Wilson, Sir Arthur, 99, 118
Wilson, Sir Henry, 155, 156
Wilson, Lady Sarah, 63
Wilson, President Woodrow,
163
Wimborne, Lord and Lady, 26,
42, 63
Windsor, H.R.H. Duke, and
Duchess of, 240-7
Wolff, Sir H. Drummond, 30
Wood, Sir Evelyn, 36
Wood, Sir Kingsley, 272, 276
Wrangel, 178
Wyndham, George, 66
Ypres, Earl of, *see* French
Zetland, Marquess, 128 n.
Zita, Empress, 156.

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176